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John Stuyvesant Ancestor And Other People

By
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JOHN STUYVESANT ANCESTOR

John Stuyvesant Ancestor

I

“**H**ELLO Central! Hello, hello! Confound it! Do I have to stand here while that silly girl is twiddling her thumbs? Hello! Give me two-thirty. No, no, can’t you hear me? Two-thirty, two-three-o. I want the Charity Organization Society——Is this the C. O. S.? Is Mr. Palgrave there?— Mr. Palgrave, this is Mr. Griffith,—Professor Griffith. I want you to come right out to my house.— To see about a baby.— No, no, no, I don’t want one. There’s one here.— Whose? Of course I don’t know.— How old? Just a new one—a day old, no, a week or two. You’ll be right out?” Mr. Griffith hung up the receiver. “Confound it, anyway! And I’ve got so much work to do. Such a thing happening in my house.” He turned almost savagely to his wife, who had been observing him with an amused twinkle. Instantly the lady assumed an air of fathomless gravity.

"I've called up Mr. Palgrave of the Charity Organization Society. He'll be here directly."

"Yes, I heard. Did he say what he would do about it?"

"No, but of course he'll take it away. What else is there to do? You certainly don't intend to keep them? Oh, Matilda, I'm all upset about this. I've so much work to do, and here this horrible complication comes tumbling down on me. I don't think you were very considerate, Matilda." The poor little man's face was twitching as if he were about to cry. It always did when he was overwrought, and the boys in school had a theory that he would be crying half the time if he only had enough juice in him to keep it up.

"I'm so sorry," said Matilda penitently. And she was really sorry, but she was more amused, and inexplicably excited. It was with difficulty she maintained her habitual air of subdued serenity. If Mr. Griffith had not been so completely occupied in subjugating his own emotions he might have observed that her eyes were shining and her cheeks red as they had not been since their courtship, fifteen years ago. It would have been worth Mr. Griffith's while to rest his eyes

on Matilda. He would have been struck by an unquiet beauty that was supposed to have disappeared once and for all long before the dial of her life pointed to thirty-five. But Mr. Griffith saw nothing. His eyes wandered aimlessly over the floor while he plucked at his vest button and repeated, "Confound it! Confound it!" under his breath.

It is to be admitted, he had been very badly used. The wife of his bosom, from whom he had never withheld a single one of his thoughts—they were all directed to the science and art of pedagogy—had engineered what amounted practically to a monstrous conspiracy against his peace of mind. She must have known about this dreadful thing for months, he reflected bitterly, and never a hint to prepare him. He had always held to the doctrine that there should be the utmost frankness between husband and wife on all matters—an arrangement which he had assumed with the customary masculine fatuousness would bear most heavily upon the husband. Matilda had apparently accepted the general principle, and yet she had stood by and watched him stumble blindfold right into the morass of the Social Problem, a morass he had always

kept as far from him as possible, both on account of professional expediency and on account of personal squeamishness.

Picture to yourself the most orderly, the most painstaking little high school principal, spare of body, angular and joyless of face, with hair that would have long since turned gray if it had not been too thin for time to bother about. Of course you'd expect to find him in a trim little bungalow on the edge of town, most probably in his library, among shelves loaded with educational treatises scientifically catalogued, seated at a broad oak table which displays the latest educational journals and all manner of devices for holding notes securely and keeping them in order. His meager income had been sufficient to equip the rest of the house with furniture built on approved craftsman lines and to provide the usual prints and casts supposed to be educational and uplifting. All this, you observe, reflects the schoolmaster's taste, or rather his ethics. Are we to suppose that Matilda, who is at any rate capable of mischief and excitement, has no taste at all? Where is her influence to be discerned? Nowhere. Even the table linen exemplifies a pedagogical theory. If this surprises you, you

simply do not know the pervasive quality of the true schoolmasterly tyranny. In the early years of their married life Matilda had made various tentatives toward interference in the household decorations. She had been brought to book—and as she was an intelligent woman, she had yielded the decorative field to her husband's correct if dreary rule.

Even the most unintellectual elements of the domestic life had been ordered systematically by Mr. Griffith. It was his choice that determined whether the maid of all work should be retained or discharged. For several years his policy had been experimental. Finally he had settled down to a grim visaged creature, Mosaic law inscribed on tables of flint, and for thirteen years had kept down the chronic rebellion of his wife against this creature *sans entrailles*. The professor was morally certain that in spite of her temperamental antipathy to the servant, Matilda had grown very dependent upon her and would recognize her value if ever there were danger of losing her. Not so; Matilda danced with joy at her departure and the installation of a gentle, brown-eyed creature with a neck like the swan's, and a serene, wonderfully modeled face. Many a time

I sat at the Griffiths' dinner table, sunk deep in pedagogical conversation, and glanced up, startled as something was spilled on me, to behold the pose and perfect beauty of the Aphrodite of Melos. She was wonderful, and she always spilled things. As Mr. Griffith very quickly surmised, she was a moron.

"She must be discharged," Mr. Griffith had said at the end of the first week.

"No," Matilda had energetically replied. "She is the loveliest thing I've ever seen. I'm going to keep her, if she breaks every dish in the house and spills hot coffee even on the chairman of the school board."

For the first time Mr. Griffith had been forced to yield. Week by week the service had grown worse. Kate, the moron Aphrodite, had early developed a detestable habit of weeping as she served the meals, and this habit grew on her. At last her health, so Matilda had explained, had become so broken as to necessitate two weeks' leave, during which time Matilda had cooked and dusted and made beds, to the humiliation of Mr. Griffith, who considered housework far beneath his spouse and the sharer of his pedagogical joys. Now Kate had come back, but oh, heavens, not

alone. The carriage that had brought her had also brought a bundle done up in shawls. A baby! O tempora, O mores! Mr. Griffith had never even suspected, though the training of observation bulked large in his pedagogic theory. And Matilda hadn't given him a single hint.

"I've put a crib in her room. Do come and see him," cried Matilda, bursting into the study with quite unbridled enthusiasm. "He's already asleep, and oh, he's the dearest little thing!"

Mr. Griffith scowled. Still, wasn't it his duty to look at the baby and perhaps question the mother? It might be more humane than to leave her to the official catechizing of the C. O. S. secretary.

A pink little head, with the silkiest brown hair emerged from the snow of Matilda's best linen. Two wee hands, with the thinnest, longest fingers clenched, the skin loose about the knuckles, rested against the baby's tiny ears. Beside the crib sat Kate, gentle brown-eyed Aphrodite, her face veiled with an expression of timid pride. Have you ever observed how a petted young cow behaves as you stroke the bobbing, curly head of her first new-born calf? She is proud, and nervous, and happy, and overcome with

wonder, all of which she expresses in one gentle "Moo." Well, as Mr. Griffith touched the little silky head, Kate all but said "Moo." "Sweet, silly creature, how lovely you look," thought Matilda.

"Nice baby," said Mr. Griffith. "What are you going to name him?"

"His name is John Stuyvesant," said Kate with sweet finality.

"John Stuyvesant?" queried Mr. Griffith. Then he added craftily,

"I don't suppose that is his father's name?"

"It's such a pretty name, don't you think so, Mrs. Griffith? And it may be his father's name. Those awful boys never tell you their right names."

"Those boys!" Oh, the ignominy, and under his own sacred roof! Mr. Griffith retired bitterly to his study. He hoped the C. O. S. secretary wouldn't be long in coming.

Mr. Palgrave, the Charity Organization secretary, or more properly, the Charity Organization itself, was a very tall, very bony man, bald, colorless, sharp-eyed. He was not a man to waste words and Mr. Griffith's account merely elicited from time to time a sibilant "Yes, yes."

"How long has she been in your house?" demanded Mr. Palgrave with a keen look that made Mr. Griffith first shudder and then blush under his sallow skin.

"Why, why— Mr. Palgrave, you're not casting suspicion at—at me? You know my position and—and my character."

"Just a routine question. But so far as that's concerned, a man in my job doesn't take much stock in moral alibis." He eyed Mr. Griffith still more keenly. "None of my business, though." Mr. Griffith blushed still more furiously. This was indeed degradation beyond his depth!

"Well," said Mr. Palgrave in a tone of everyday business, "what do you want me to do?"

"Take them away," cried Mr. Griffith.

"I can't do that. Of course, if you kick them out and they're starving, the C. O. S. will be bound to do something for them. But with your character and position"—Mr. Palgrave eyed Mr. Griffith again piercingly.

Mr. Griffith said nothing. Peace was dead. Honor was gone. The values of life were extinct.

The door flew open and Matilda entered, girl-

ish and rosy, her eyes shining, with a bundle of lace-trimmed linen squeezed tight against her breast. Following her came gentle Kate, still almost saying "Moo."

"Oh, Mr. Palgrave, did you ever see a sweeter little thing?"

Mr. Palgrave's face lighted up, like a rocky hillside field under a burst of November sun.

"Pretty baby," he said judiciously. "What do you want me to do with it?" he added in an undertone, with a cautious glance at Kate.

"Oh, we're going to keep him, forever," said Matilda with determination.

"Ah-h-h-h-h-h," breathed a little voice from the bundle.

"Oh, we must put him back," cried Matilda, turning to Kate in consternation.

"Well, Professor Griffith, I must be going," said Mr. Palgrave, as the door closed upon the baby and its devotees. "If I can do anything, why, call on me. I guess the moral alibi must be all right, after all. Good-by."

Mr. Griffith sank into a chair, miserably. He had first been duped, and now he had been suspected. For one who had led so exemplary a life, could humiliation be deeper? Matilda

glided into the room and threw her arm round his neck—a most novel and disquieting gesture.

“Matilda,” he said inconsolably. “I have been deeply humiliated. Your harboring of this creature has thrust a terrible injustice upon me. I have been made the subject of a monstrous suspicion. I have been suspected of being—of being the author——”

“You, Harold? Oh, how absurd!” And Matilda ended with a little peal of laughter. For years she hadn’t laughed like this. And as she ran away, Mr. Griffith’s anger at her flippancy began to give way to the most inexplicable sense of shame. Why it was he did not know, neither do you, nor I. But as he strode to and fro and happened to catch a glimpse of himself in the glass over his desk, he discovered that his face, from pointed chin to the retreating roots of his sparse hair, was red as a cock’s comb.

II

THE Griffith's home was the accepted rendezvous of the Friday Evening Circle, an organization anciently intended to circulate from house to house, which had assumed a fixed habitat, partly because Mr. Griffith was the town's most tireless seeker after ultimate truth, partly because everybody else found his own brilliancy enhanced under the sympathetic hostess-ship of Mrs. Griffith. The object of the Circle was to promote philosophical thinking as a corrective of the narrowing tendency of too much high school teaching. In the dark ages around the end of the last century, the Circle had studied Browning, under the illusion that he was a deep philosopher. From Browning they had advanced to Herbert Spencer, William James and Bergson. Then they had retrograded to Rabin-dranath Tagore, and still further to the sociologists. Now, last stage of all, they were immersed in the study of eugenics. Of all the subjects they had pursued, eugenics most profoundly gripped them. Especially the horrors of the Jukes, the tribes of Ishmael, the Kallikaks and their kind

multiplying beyond the normal rate of mankind. The Circle trembled for the coming generations, in which, by the way, its vital stake was of the most tenuous and altruistic.

Of the dozen or more segments of this Circle, the most studied hard, said little, and attended to the proceedings with knit brows and eager, weary eyes. That is all I know of them, as I was extremely irregular in my attendance. One who stood out slightly from the group was Mr. Benson, who taught French in the high school and affected shrugging shoulders and pointed wit. Another was Miss Platt, teacher of mathematics and physics, veteran of over a score of Commencements. Her tawny hair always appeared somewhat unkempt and her severe garments were rebellious to any conceivable style. She had kindly wrinkles about her eyes and mouth, a pertinacious chin and conscientious brow. She evidently suffered agonies under the eugenics debate; too many things relating to the origin and destiny of the unfit must be spoken of plainly to accord with the happiness of a lady brought up among all the reticences of a small provincial city. But Miss Platt was not a person to shirk her plain duty, and she

went through the eugenics reports like a band-saw ripping through a log, knots and all. I end this catalogue with Gustav Kieselbacher, enormous, with sandy hair and red bristly beard, wide eyes and brow like a cliff. Gustav taught German, real German, sinewy, striding, crested with Pickelhauben, with overtones of Shrecklichkeit and undertones of Wehmut and Frühlingswehen. Of course that was a scandal to some while the war was on, but the city was too purely American to fall into a panic over the German language question. Gustav was a teacher who got results. At his first roar the class surrendered at discretion, and not a student ever recovered fully from his initial fright. "At lead," Gustav would growl complacently, "dhey learn to bronounse my name corr-r-ectly."

Great was the excitement in the circle when Mr. Griffith announced, one evening, that there was a high grade moron in his own kitchen.

"Do bring her in!" cried the guests in chorus. "It will be so instructive to put her through the tests."

"Oh no, Harold," pleaded Mrs. Griffith. "The poor thing will be frightened to death."

“Nonsense, Matilda. She won’t understand what we’re driving at. Shall I call her?”

Mrs. Griffith rose. “I don’t think it’s fair. But promise me you won’t do anything to embarrass her.”

Kate had just finished the dishes and was leaning over a clothes basket supported on two chairs, where little John Stuyvesant was sleeping.

“Kate,” said Mrs. Griffith, “our guests are playing a sort of game, and it is important to have somebody who doesn’t know anything about it, to answer a lot of questions. It’s just a part of the game, you see. We’d like to have you come in.”

“Oh dear, I can’t go in, in this horrid old dress,” objected Kate nervously.

“Well, just bring baby along, and they won’t even see your dress.”

A smile of enlightenment broke over Kate’s face. “Oh! They don’t care a bit to see me—they want a look at John Stuyvesant.” Kate cautiously put back the covers of the basket and took the wee sleeper into her arms. Little John opened wide his dark eyes, yawned vigorously, and slipped back into his slumbers. Kate followed her mistress into the living-room and con-

fronted the guests with a face glowing with complacent embarrassment.

"Sit here, Kate," commanded Mr. Griffith. And in a tone intended for an aside, "We'll test her for age eight.—Now, Kate, what is the difference between a fly and a butterfly?"

"Why, goodness, Mr. Griffith, they ain't a bit alike."

"Yes, but how do they differ?" insisted Mr. Griffith.

"I'm sure I don't know what you want me to say," Kate replied, bewildered.

Mr. Griffith exchanged significant glances with Miss Platt.

"Kate, will you begin with twenty and count backward to naught?"

"Naught? I don't know what that is."

"Well, then to one."

"One, two, three, four——"

"No, no!" cried Mr. Griffith impatiently. "Begin with twenty."

"Twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two——"

"No, no! not that way at all!" shouted Mr. Griffith. Kate's frightened eyes sought refuge in Mrs. Griffith's.

"Try the pictures, Harold," suggested Mrs.

Griffith firmly. "Now Kate, take a good look at these pictures and tell us what you think of them." She bent over Kate's chair and held before her four drawings, one of a face without nose, another lacking mouth, another eyes, and the fourth, of a figure without arms. "Now, what do you think of them?"

"I don't think they are very pretty, do you?" Kate looked up at her mistress with a smile of amusement.

"What's wrong with them?" demanded Mr. Griffith.

Kate knitted her brow. "Well, they look like dagoes."

Mr. Griffith pointed with his pencil at the noseless face. "Did you ever know a person who looked like that?" he asked in an even, irritated voice.

"N-no," stammered Kate, again taking fright. "He kind of favors Uncle Joe Black. Is that who you mean?"

"Good God!" ejaculated Mr. Griffith. "Well, we'll test for age six."

"No, Harold," said Mrs. Griffith. "You'd bewilder anyone with those foolish questions. Try age twelve."

"And batiencce, batiencce, and still batiencce!" roared Gustav with kindly intent but terrifying result. Kate shuddered and turned a frightened face toward Gustav's colossal, heaving form.

"Now, dear," said Mrs. Griffith soothingly, "tell us the names of as many things as you can think of while Mr. Griffith looks at his watch."

Kate contracted her brows. "Bread, butter, peas, coal, dresses, things, butter, dresses, peas—Well, you know, Mrs. Griffith, I never went to high school——"

"Of course you didn't," snorted Mr. Griffith, "but is that any reason why you shouldn't have more than six words in your head?"

Kate's eyes filled with tears. Mrs. Griffith glanced indignantly at her husband. "You are forgetting what we are trying to do, Harold. This isn't an entrance examination."

"That's true," admitted Mr. Griffith apologetically. "Kate, will you please define justice? Tell us what justice means?"

"I can't," sighed Kate. The tears were trickling over her cheeks. "I ain't getting justice. Oh, Mrs. Griffith, why are they poking all those questions at me? I ain't done nothing."

"It was only part of the game," said Maltida.

"You answered just what we wanted, dear, just what the game needed. Come, now, we must carry little John to his crib."

And as Mrs. Griffith drew the door to, shutting out the hostile audience, Kate sobbed bitterly, "And not one of them even looked at John Stuyvesant."

When Matilda returned Mr. Griffith was lecturing earnestly. "From one single defective, Martin Kallikak, Jr., the state has been cursed with 480 descendants, of whom 143 were feeble-minded, many were immoral, many drunkards and some criminals. The descendants of Ada Juke have cost the state a million and a quarter in the course of a century. That is what makes this girl and her child such a serious problem. The girl is not really bad, but you can't say but her child will contribute to the state just such another chain of imbecility, pauperism, crime, immorality. It will be a mercy if he does not grow up."

Gustav stole a shrewd glance at Matilda, who was standing erect, her cheeks very red, her eyes flashing.

"Ja, ja," he grunted. "Dhe trouble vidth us Americans is, ve don'd keep our science and our

life separate. Now, as a scientist I would have the unfit rooted out. I would show no mercy. I would have only big, strong, healthy men—ja, ja, with stiff, red beards and broad, homely, honest faces, just like me. That is science. But, Gott sei Dank, I am not the Divine Providence. What for a life it would be, all the men like me and the ladies to correspond! That girl and her baby are all wrong, from the scientific standpoint. But from the standpoint of life viewed, she is beautiful and the baby is beautiful and they are happy and there is sun enough for all.”

“That is to abdicate reason altogether,” expostulated Mr. Griffith. “Your doctrine is not only fallacious, it is pernicious. You confound action by advancing at the same time the most contradictory principles.”

“Ja, ja,” growled Gustav, the joy of argument upon him. “For very I have this great, broad German brain,” (and he beat his brow with his huge fist) “if I am not to harbor contradictions, many of them? The frog has very little brain: he has no contradictions—he goes straight to his puddle. The Australian black has small brain: he has no contradictions—he goes where his nose leads him, looking neither to right nor to left,

to where dhe Walfisch lies stranded. Vidh my colossal brain I see things double: science and life."

Professor Griffith resumed his lecture. "Of course we do not know whether feeble-mindedness is a unit character. It is not certain that the child may not turn out normal. We know nothing at all of his ancestry beyond the traits of his mother."

The French teacher shrugged his shoulders.

"Was it not Napoleon who said: *Moi, je suis ancêtre?* What's the little chap's name? Oh yes; John Stuyvesant, John Stuyvesant, Ancestor."

Wretched flippancy, it fell flat, as it deserved. But it was the one thing that poor Kate, listening at the door to the storm of words, could understand. She had already made up her mind that little John ought to have a third name, and Ancestor sounded very well. Henceforth so she called him, despite all the protests from Matilda who, although she had become a foe of the science of eugenics, felt an obscure curse inherent in the name, John Stuyvesant Ancestor.

III

IF Mr. Griffith had cherished any hope that Kate and little John, with the succession of Jukes or Kallikaks potential in them would remove themselves from under the shelter of his uneasy responsibility, disillusionment was to be his lot. Kate was extremely contented, having abdicated most of her household duties to Matilda, now a convert to the doctrine, despised by her husband, that housework is an entertaining and instructive game, after all. Kate spent most of her waking hours in a rocking-chair, smiling upon little John, who early learned to repay smiles two for one. John was a good baby, never crying except with reason, and seldom having reason to cry. And this was a mercy to Mr. Griffith, who had never succeeded in getting the baby off his nerves. To be sure, Mr. Griffith gave John no credit for his good nature. This and other little unexpected traits led Mr. Griffith to conclude that John was not like other babies—there was, in his opinion, something very ominous in this fact of unlikeness. He was of course right in regarding little John as in a

way unique among babies. Every baby is unique if you come to know it well. Only adults are alike, standardized by the pressure of social life.

When John Stuyvesant entered upon the creeping stage Kate's life became less satisfactory. She was born to sit quietly smiling, looking beautiful, and not really much more sentient than a sunbeam. The baby's restless excursions to far corners and through open doors disturbed her peace. After futile efforts to restore John to the habit of lying still and bartering smiles, she half gave him up. More and more the care of little John devolved, along with the housework, upon Matilda. Soon it was for Matilda that John reserved his sunniest smiles; and it was Matilda who was first honored with the title "Mam-ma." Kate the beautiful rocked herself into somnolence, sighing softly from time to time—while little John crawled tirelessly after Matilda as she prepared the meals or set the house in order. As he grew stronger in body and will he would pull himself up by a chair, to reach resolutely for the glasses on the table or the flower pots in the window. "No, no, John," Matilda would say reprovingly. Whereupon he would drop his dimpled chin on his breast and

wail heartbrokenly, until Matilda would soothe his soul with a kiss.

John was docile, and once denied a desirable object, he would never touch it again. He still desired it and would kneel before it wistfully, his eyes glowing, his tiny fingers opening and closing, the sweetest picture of resisted temptation in the world.

Thanksgiving was at hand, and the high school had to be decorated for an appropriate masque. All morning the teachers had worked hard, especially Gustav, whose enthusiasm for "our Pilgrim forefathers" was almost pathetically ludicrous. Matilda had been pressed into service, but proved less helpful and suggestive than in other years. All she wanted was to get through as quickly as possible, whether the Thanksgiving spirit were properly expressed or not. The day was bleak, and Matilda could not be sure that Kate would keep the house warm enough for little John. Kate was not sufficiently sensitive to changes in temperature to keep herself comfortable; John might freeze without exciting her attention, or at least without arousing her to effort.

At last the work was done, and Gustav insisted

on conveying Mr. Griffith and Matilda to their door in his car. The distance was not great, but Gustav's car was new and had to be admired. Whatever speed laws there were in town Gustav violated, and in a twinkling the three were inside the Griffiths' door. The house was cold, in fact, and Matilda ran anxiously to the kitchen. In a moment she returned, pale and tearful, crumpling a scrap of paper in her fingers.

"They're gone!" she said despairingly.

"Gone?" exclaimed Mr. Griffith, suppressing an impulse to cheer.

"Yes, look at this note. I shouldn't have left the house this morning."

Mr. Griffith read: "Dear Mrs. Gruffus. Im goin home. Im sorry to leve you fokes. Im not feelin very wel. I guess Im not strong enuf for housewurk. Im all broke down

Yrs. truly Kate "

Mr. Griffith chuckled. "Poor thing, all broke down. Why, Gustav, she hasn't done a thing for months. She's too lazy even to look after her own baby."

Matilda was crying softly. "Poor little John. Whatever will become of him? I'm just sure that girl will let him die. My own baby John."

Gustav's face was working with emotion. "Where iss her home? Maybe I get her for you again?"

Mr. Griffith shook his head violently.

"Oh, Gustav, do you think you could?" pleaded Matilda. "She used to live at Vinton, and I suppose that's where she's gone."

"Vinton? Ja, ja. Sixty miles around by dhe railroad, twenty miles over dhe hills. I meet her at dhe train."

"But Gustav," protested Mr. Griffith, pursuing him to the car. "Gustav!"

Gustav heard nothing, amid the sharp explosions of his machine. Mr. Griffith shouted angrily, but to no avail. Gustav's car was plunging down the slope, a tail of black smoke from the exhaust lengthening out behind it.

The afternoon was graying toward nightfall. Matilda was seated at the window, looking anxiously down the street, while Mr. Griffith paced the floor with quick, irritated steps.

"At last!" cried Matilda, springing up. "And he's got them!"

"Confound it!" ejaculated her husband. "Put on your coat, anyway. It's no use taking cold, into the bargain."

Matilda flew down the walk, her husband following, grumbling in an undertone.

"Heisa, Jucché!" shouted Gustav, bumping his wheel against the curve. "Home again!" He sprang out and threw open the door for Kate, who descended wearily, holding little John to her breast. Matilda snatched the baby from Kate's arms and scrutinized his rosy face anxiously to see if he had taken harm. He smiled divinely.

"You're coming in, Gustav?" asked Matilda. And then she observed that Kate was gazing into Gustav's face with an expression of settled despair. Gustav was visibly embarrassed.

"You're coming in, Gustav?" repeated Matilda.

Gustav started. "No, I must to my home. You vill understand, Mrs. Griffith, sometimes misinterpretations arise, most innocently on both sides?"

"What on earth do you mean, Gustav?"

"I can't explain yust now," replied Gustav, mounting to his seat. "Au revoir, friends."

Matilda was deeply perplexed, but in a moment she had forgotten Gustav and everything else except little John, soft and warm against

her breast. Kate was following at her elbow, but she never thought of Kate either until she was aroused to Kate's existence by a burst of sobs.

"Oh, Mrs. Griffith," wept Kate, "I just can't marry that awful Dutchman."

"Marry him!" exclaimed Matilda, "is he proposing to marry you?"

"Yes, of course. He didn't exactly say it, but can't I see?" Kate smiled knowingly. "All those Dutchmen are marrying men. And what did he come after me for?"

"I wouldn't worry, dear," said Matilda laughing.

"If he didn't have such an awful name. I told him I couldn't marry a man with an awful name like Kieselbacher. I said he could change his name. Don't you think Orlando Lavelle is a pretty name?"

"Yes," laughed Matilda. "What did Gustav think of it?"

Kate resumed her weeping. "He said he wouldn't change his name to marry a princess. He said if I married him he would always call me Katereeny Kieselbacher. Till I died. Isn't he horrid?"

"Yes," agreed Matilda, choking down her laughter. Gustav's cryptic words about "misinterpretations" were clear enough now.

The next day, Kate wept every time the door bell rang, certain that that awful Dutchman had come to torment her. But Gustav did not come that day, nor the next. On the third day, he appeared, very constrained in manner, as one who has an important explanation to make. Matilda meant to be polite, but it was impossible for her to contain her merriment.

"Well, Gustav, she's run away again. And it's all your fault."

"So-só?" exclaimed Gustav in a tone of consternation.

"But she left little John. He's mine now for keeps."

"Ja-já." Gustav's face brightened.

"I suppose I ought to condole with you, Gustav."

"Condole?" Gustav blushed.

"I suppose I ought to feel worried about that poor girl. But I don't."

"Dhe awful egoism of dhe female. You haf her baby, vhat you care for dhe sorrowing mother?"

"Not a bit. Besides, she isn't sorrowing. Her parting from little John she will recall as just a sweet tragedy. This escape is a wonderful adventure to her."

"Escape?" Gustav lifted his shaggy brows.

"Yes, escape from you." Matilda laughed joyously. "Here's her letter." Gustav read, scowling fiercely.

"Dere Mrs. Griffus. Im goin away this time wher that oful man cant find me. I must say farwel to my deer littl John Stivesant Anstor. He loves you moren me. He does not no what his poor mother has suferd for him. Be kind and good to him and hevon will reward you. I couldn't marry him. My poor mother wud turn over in her grave if she new I married a forener. We are all an old American famly. We came over in a ship I ferget its name. We dont go much by foreners. He has such an oful name. Id die ruthern be called Catereeny Kezulbocker.

"yrs truly Kate."

"Ja-já," growled Gustav. "As a yung Loch-invar, I am a gross und dismal failure. But"—and he grinned grotesquely—"Mr. Griffith vill be so pleased! Ve haf safed little John Stuyvesant Ancestor."

IV

THE disappearance of one familiar face seemed not greatly to disturb little John, even though the face was that of his natural mother. Mr. Griffith looked the matter up in the books, and found that obtuseness to the claims of the blood is characteristic of certain strains of defectiveness. Dire are the consequences, too, at times. But Matilda would have none of this discovery. Kate was by nature a good mother to a very little baby, but incapable of persisting in her devotion to a baby who wouldn't lie still. The natural relation had been broken, not by John, but by his mother. Therefore nothing could be inferred as to John's character from the fact that he remained cheerful under his bereavement. Besides, John was too much occupied to find time to brood. He was just learning the two fascinating arts of talking and walking. Upon awaking in the morning he would lie still, patiently exploring the capacity of his tongue and lips to shape new sounds. Dressed and fed, he would get himself balanced

on his wobbly little legs, and make a brave effort to walk across the room. Many and mighty were the falls he experienced, but beyond a little "Huh!" these drew no expression of annoyance from him. Soon he came to regard a tumble as a great joke, and prostrate, would wriggle his head around so that he could exchange a smile with Matilda. A droll little head it was, with only a thin brown fuzz from the back of his neck to his crown and from his crown to his forehead a narrow strip of long hair falling in thick ringlets on either side.

In the fond hope that Matilda might be relieved from her slavery to John, Mr. Griffith had installed in the house a maid of uncertain disposition but fully guaranteed competence, said to be an adept at winning the confidence of children. This paragon John politely ignored. If her advances became too insistent, he would gently struggle to withdraw himself, appealing to Matilda for succor with his eloquent brown eyes. If Matilda left John alone in the house with the competent Anna, he would climb upon a settee by the window, where he could command a view of the approach to the house, and wait with the infinite patience of babyhood for

Matilda's return. The wistful little face peering through the window almost moved Matilda to tears, and each time she resolved she would never again desert her charge. Mr. Griffith fumed about the little parasite who might just as well have made up to Anna so as to leave a little freedom to Matilda. As for Matilda, she was quite content. A baby's preference is after all the most seductive flattery in the world.

"Oh, yes, I know I'm spoiling him," she would say apologetically. "But you are constantly repeating that it can be for only a little time. There is nothing about him now that isn't lovely. Soon the traits of his defective heredity will begin to emerge, one by one, until he is all marred. So you say. Then why shouldn't I make the most of him, before the dark days come? But they never will." And Matilda would snatch up the wee creature tugging at her skirts and kiss his cheeks all rosy.

It is not to be supposed that Matilda's liberty was the only thing sacrificed to the seductive whims of little John. Through the fifteen years of their married life, Matilda and her husband had always read the same books and journals and had thus attained a broad basis for stimulat-

ing discussion. Now Matilda read nothing. Mr. Griffith tried to continue his devotion to the literature of education, but it was a joyless and profitless proceeding. Instead of taking in the meaning of a page at a glance, he fell victim to such a sense of lack of connection that it was often a puzzle to him whether he had read a page or no. He began to have a low opinion of books that he had formerly accepted as almost divinely inspired. Nothing was the same since that little waster had established himself in the house.

The Circle still assembled, and still discussed eugenics. But the savor had gone out of the inquiry. Mr. Griffith found his mind growing stiff and stale; he was no longer able to hold a commanding position in the debate. More and more, frivolous ideas began to find expression, under the contagion of Matilda's irresponsible moods. Gustav had taken to the detestable habit of disputing axioms, and the French teacher would interpolate anecdotes that had no better object than to raise a laugh. Mr. Griffith felt that it would perhaps be best to disband the Circle. He was suffering keenly, and Miss Platt suffered in sympathy. She alone of the Circle re-

alized how matters were turning, and understood the true cause, in Matilda's pathologic concentration on little John.

One day when Miss Platt had concluded a discussion of school discipline with Mr. Griffith, she succeeded, at the cost of great mental perturbation, in broaching the question of what was amiss in the Griffith household. Mr. Griffith had reached a point where he had to confide in someone, and set forth his despairs so eloquently that Miss Platt made up her mind that it was her duty to do something about it. Did Mr. Griffith think it would be all right for her to have a heart to heart talk with Matilda? Mr. Griffith clutched at the straw eagerly, desperately. It was agreed that Miss Platt should call that very evening.

Accordingly at eight Miss Platt, all weary with screwing up her resolution to see if it would stick, rang the Griffith doorbell. Mr. Griffith, all weary with rehearsing the arguments Miss Platt ought to use, admitted her.

"She's putting the baby to bed," said Mr. Griffith in a low voice. "It will take some time, but perhaps it would be best to wait."

"I think I'll go in and see her," breathed Miss

Platt, finding her resolution behaving like the sand in an hourglass.

Matilda's door was ajar. Miss Platt stepped noiselessly into the room. Little John, all rosy and naked down to a last pink stocking, lay flat on the white coverlet, his big eyes, black in the lamplight, fixed upon Matilda's face smiling down upon him. Matilda was reciting with lisping rhythm,

“My son John

Went to bed with his tockies on

One tockie off and one tockie on.”

Suddenly she swooped down and kissed him on his neck. John shrieked with laughter and struck out valiantly with his chubby arms and legs. Matilda rose, and John lay flat again, his defenses mobilized for the invited attack, his eyes and cheeks glowing, his mouth open with anticipation of laughter.

Miss Platt's resolution had ebbed to the last grain, and a chilling embarrassment seized her. To have intruded upon such sweet intimacies! She had a vaguely troubled feeling, as a stake set green, not quite dead, may form abortive buds when spring bursts upon the fields. She tiptoed backwards through the door.

"Well?" said Mr. Griffith anxiously.

Miss Platt glanced at him with a curiously veiled expression.

She shook her head. "I don't think it best to broach those subjects we discussed. Not now. Good-night." And she was gone.

"Didn't I hear you speaking to someone?" inquired Matilda emerging into the living-room with a little figure in fuzzy white from toe to crown riding on her shoulder.

"Yes, it was Miss Platt. She wanted to speak to you, but she went away when she found you occupied with the baby."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I wonder what she had on her mind?"

"I think it was about the Circle. You know, Matilda, the Circle doesn't seem to amount to much nowadays."

"Oh, do you think so? I hadn't noticed anything wrong. But I'm not paying much attention to the Circle now."

"That's just the trouble, Matilda. You were the life of the Circle. You have abandoned it, just like everything else we held worth while."

"Oh, that's the trouble?" Matilda seated

herself and drew little John down into her lap. "You hear that, you terrible baby." She pinched John's cheeks. "You've spoiled the Circle, and everything else worth while."

"Matilda," said Mr. Griffith, with a note of despair, "I wish you would at least take me seriously."

"Very well, we will, won't we, John?" John smiled winsomely.

"You are an intelligent, refined, educated woman. To what use are you putting your talents? To serving as nurse for a single child, and that not one with potentialities equivalent to your own, but the child of a defective, a moron."

Matilda laughed. "According to the statistics that is what we intelligent, educated, refined women are coming to. What else do we have to nurse? And anyway, did you ever see anything so sweet as this little defective?" She stood little John erect upon her lap and pressed his cheek against her own, which seemed to grow rosy by contagion.

Mr. Griffith sighed. It was really of no use, but he might as well go through with it.

“We ought to bear in mind that we have laid out our lives upon a definite plan. The need of the world, as we have seen it, is better care of the people already in it. Especially better training for the troops of children rising year by year to manhood and womanhood. For this work we fitted ourselves, to the best of our ability. We have not spared effort in keeping ourselves abreast of the best that is being done in the educational field. To this end we have subordinated everything. We agreed that we would forego many things that go to make up the ordinary happiness of life. We agreed that we could not be handicapped by cares of a purely individualistic, domestic character.”

“We agreed?” demanded Matilda saucily.

“No, you agreed.”

Mr. Griffith sank back in his chair, visibly shaken.

“I agreed? Well, anyway, you assented.”

“Of course,” Matilda laughed. “I’m being terribly unkind. But, Harold, do you ever look backward over our educational strivings? Think how enthusiastic we were, when we were very young, over the substitution of science for classics in the high school course. We thought that

would extirpate the children's indifference and idleness. It didn't. How many other enthusiasms we've had since; manual training, training for citizenship, moral training, industrial training, and what not. And it is the same old struggle with children who don't want to surrender their personalities to us. We can't get very near to the children in the schools. I am near to this little piece of humanity anyway."

"I think you're not quite fair to our schools, Matilda," said Mr. Griffith weakly. "We do get better results. We do interest a greater proportion. There are more children now who like to go to school."

"Oh, yes, I suppose I am unfair. I suppose it is because I've been so frightfully bored through all these years. Those educational books and journals I've forced myself to grind through! Heavens, how did I ever survive them? There wasn't the least bit about them that was real, to me. I didn't know why I was coming to feel so old before my time. Now I know, because I've found something real in this wee child of sin. Why, he's fast asleep. It was the educational talk that did it. He must away to his little bed. And don't mind the nonsense

I've talked, Harold. Somehow I seem to be intoxicated. Perhaps it's the spring."

Don't mind? Imagine that at the cost of your youth and much travail you have erected a temple, not spacious nor lofty, perhaps, but built according to the most approved canons you know. And within it you have nourished a flame of the ideal, rather thin, emitting little light and less warmth, but still a flame. And one day the woman that God gave you opens the temple door, gazes calmly upon the flame, and with a breath puts it out. Don't mind!

V

MATILDA'S mood was for all the world like that of the June breeze, playing through the open window beside her. Now the breeze would be soft as a child's breath, joyous with its burden of fragrance from the apple trees; now it would whip itself into a petulant humor, scattering the blossoms like drifting snowflakes. For some minutes you'd feel the coolness and soft exuberance of the spring just expiring. Suddenly the character of the breeze would change and you'd become conscious of the glow and tense purpose of the summer. Matilda was watching little John, seated cross-legged on the floor, constructing towers of blocks. Her eyes glowed gently; John looked to her more beautiful and adorable than she had imagined anything mortal could look. His cheeks were a dusky flame under their soft tan; his eyes were great limpid jewels; his hair was a mass of lustrous brown curls. His whole heart was in the success of his tower, and so by sympathy was Matilda's. It was John's project and

Matilda refrained from interfering. But when he would lay a block out of the true, dooming his whole structure to collapse, Matilda could hardly keep from crying sharply: "No, no, John, not that way at all!"

The blocks annoyed her. They were decorated with big letters and numerals, animals, birds, ships, locomotives, all done in hideously crude colors. It was not the crude color that offended Matilda, but the naïve and crafty educational purpose. Disgusting trickery, to try to catch the purest and sweetest thing in the world, a child's instinct for play, and foist a bit of education on it. Matilda had commissioned Mr. Griffith to get plain blocks, but none were to be had in town. The educational plot against babyhood was all-pervading, and Matilda indignantly suspected Mr. Griffith of being in sympathy with it. She had caught him trying to teach John the names of the letters, and she had not only put a stop to this endeavor, but she had made Mr. Griffith promise to do the blocks over in plain colors.

Down came the tower with a crash that made Matilda put her hands to her ears. "Huh!" exclaimed little John, turning his bright face to

Matilda. He picked up a block and pointed a tiny finger at a grotesque hippopotamus.

"A-e-e," he lisped sweetly. He took up another block without looking at it.

"B-e-e."

Now he stooped over and examined a block with his little brows puckered as for a mighty intellectual effort. His finger wandered over the figure of an automobile of the horseless carriage stage.

"The-ee." He threw the block as far away as he could and laughed so merrily that Matilda laughed herself into a sunny humor. After all, in the contest between education and babyhood, it's babyhood that wins.

"Matilda!" Mr. Griffith appeared in the doorway. His face had grown thinner of late, and a nervous weariness had become habitual with him. Just now his brow was knotted with perplexity and the corners of his mouth twitched.

"I've been hunting this house over for Dugdale's *Jukes*. It seems to have disappeared completely. You haven't seen it?"

Matilda's cheeks flushed but her eyes rested calmly on her husband's face.

"I burned it."

"Burned it!" gasped Mr. Griffith.

"Yes, I burned it. I also burned Goddard's *Kallikak Family*, and Davenport, and Saleeby."

"But my dear! Those were public library books!"

"Yes. The public library shouldn't have such books. They should never have been written. They hang like a dreadful curse over my sweet little son John." Her eyes filled with tears. "My innocent, beautiful baby John."

"It's all right, my dear," said Mr. Griffith apologetically. But the storm of sorrow was upon Matilda now and was not so easily to be checked. Little John stared up at Matilda with round eyes of wonder. His mamma crying? Why? One thing was clear to him, however; whatever you have to cry for, it's a great comfort to be kissed. He trotted to Matilda's couch and climbed upon it. "Poo' Ma, poo' Ma," he said soothingly, and showered kisses on her wet cheek. The charm seemed not to work well. Matilda began to sob violently, and then suddenly became very pale and still.

"My dear!" cried Harold, aghast. He set John on the floor and supported Matilda's head

with cushions. Then he ran to the telephone. Little John, overwhelmed with a vague woe, pressed his brow against the floor and wailed miserably.

"You needn't have called the doctor," said Matilda faintly. "I'm much better now."

The next morning little John awoke to a new order of the universe. His mamma was not at hand to dress him. Instead, there was a brusque, stout person who explained to him that she was Mrs. Lake, a practical nurse. This seemed no good reason to John why she should violate his liberty by dressing him. He resisted to the best of his ability, but succumbed to superior force. Softly crying, he set out for a tour of the house. "Ma de'! Ma de'!" Mr. Griffith, who had just returned to the house, encountered John emerging from the study.

"My dear son John," he said tenderly, "your mamma isn't in the house. She has gone away for a few days. Then she will come back."

John stared incredulously. There were still two rooms to explore. He went through them calling despairingly, "Ma de'! Ma de'!" Soon he returned to the living-room and climbed upon the settee to watch the approach to the house.

He was taken away for breakfast, and after breakfast reluctantly followed Mrs. Lake for a walk. But on this day, and the days following, whenever he could escape the tyranny of superior force he would make for the settee and gaze down the walk toward the street. In the mornings he would slip quietly from his bed and plant himself on the settee until Mrs. Lake should come to dress him.

One night Mr. Griffith, whose room adjoined John's, was awakened by the sound of a little body bumping against his bed. It was John walking in a stupor. "Ma de'," he whimpered. Mr. Griffith caught the little somnambulist in his arms and was startled to find his face flaming hot. Plainly something was amiss with little John. The doctor, summoned from his bed, said that there was probably not much the matter, but he would call again the next day. In the morning, John was pale and quiet, wholly content to lie abed, until his cheeks again began to glow and his eyes to shine with fever. The doctor made show of taking cultures and looked very wise and efficient. Mrs. Lake was thoroughly quizzed as to where she had taken little John on her walks, and whether he had been

with other children. According to the manner of practical nurses, Mrs. Lake asserted stoutly that she knew nothing and had not taken John to any place where he could possibly have been exposed to infection. Whatever the malady that had befallen little John, it was plainly beyond the competence of the doctor. Half the child's days had fallen from him, and he was again an inarticulate little thing, passive, except for his tiny hands with fingers opening and closing persistently as if grasping for something forbidden him. Life, no doubt, and light and the world, beautiful as it is to the wide eyes of babyhood.

It was all over with little John, and the menace of defective traits emerging was defeated. No longer did his restless little form throw a long shadow over posterity, Jukes or Kallikaks, criminal and pauper youths, foolish maids dancing down a primrose path extending through the generations. That, said Gustav, was the science of it, but the life of it was, the sun would be less bright, the springtime less sweet, the world less beautiful, because little John was not. The doctor offered sage opinions as to the low survival capacity of individuals of defective stock.

No doubt John had harked back to an ancestor who had a penchant for dying in infancy. Oh, excellent science! It did not save a baby's life, but it saved a brave professional face.

Of all this Matilda was unaware. She had very nearly met death herself, and at the time when John was swiftly declining to extinction, Matilda in her mortal weakness had accepted as quite cogent the reasons presented by Mr. Griffith for not bringing little John to see her. John had a cold that might be infectious, and there was another person to be considered, John's new brother, tiny and wizened, but evincing an unshakable determination to live. This excuse held even after Matilda's strength had greatly improved. Matilda might have wondered at the persistence of the indisposition if what remained of her consciousness beyond pain and weariness had not been occupied with a series of revelations as to what you can find out about a personality at its very dawn. The new baby was incredibly interesting. As you can see, a hideous obligation to report the truth rested upon Mr. Griffith, poor broken creature, whose cares in the late weeks had quite consumed whatever initiative he had possessed.

One Sunday morning Gustav called, at Mr. Griffith's urgent request. Mr. Griffith met him as he approached the house.

"They are at home again," said Mr. Griffith nervously.

"Ja, so. But how does she bear it?" Gustav eyed Mr. Griffith narrowly.

"She doesn't know yet. She jumped to the conclusion that he was out with Mrs. Lake, and I—I want you to tell her, Gustav."

"Me!" cried Gustav, outraged. "I? Und vy me? Vy me?"

"Gustav," pleaded Mr. Griffith. "I simply can't do it. She is so happy, and I'm—well, I'm——"

"You are her husband," said Gustav austere. "Vat am I? Nodhing. I am a German, and therefore you think I haf no heart. But Gemuth, Gustav!" He strode past Mr. Griffith to the door.

Matilda was in the living-room, on the settee by the window where she could command the approach to the house. By her side was a basket, wherein one could discover a little pink head peeping out of the white with two tiny wrinkled hands pressing against the pearl-colored ears.

“Ah, how glad we are to see you home again, Mrs. Griffith, looking so vell and beaudiful,” rumbled Gustav. “See, see, dhat is dhe little son! Fine head; it is dhe head of a philosopher! And dhose little strong hands; he vill haf a vill of his own! Much trouble he vill make you, and much more joy.”

“Yes,” smiled Matilda, “much trouble, but I’m not afraid. As for joy, I already have it. Do you know, Gustav, little John hasn’t seen him yet? Won’t he be an astonished baby?”

Gustav cleared his throat. If only he had a manageable voice; but his bass was sure to split if he tried to soften it.

“Dear lady—little John vas very sick. Ve dared not tell you. Ve did all ve could. Dhe doctor vas splendid, it vas as if it had been a little prince. But ve could nodhing. Little John Stuyvesant Ancestor is gadhered to his faders.”

Matilda was very still. Gustav did not dare to look at her. But the world had to go on, and something had to be said.

“It is a fine baby you haf, dhat is sure. And vat vill ve call dhe little heir of dhe House of Griffith?”

Matilda remained silent, an aeon, it seemed, to Gustav. Then in a voice that seemed quite calm, she said:

“I shall call him John Stuyvesant 2nd. For after all it was the coming of little John that changed——”

A sob interrupted her. Deep awe fell upon Gustav; he was in the presence of mystery. He tiptoed away, the floor creaking mightily under him.

II

A Place in the Sun

THE Limited had been making up time, picking its way among bare, red-brown hills scattered at random over a plain so burned and dead that not even the candelabra cactus could raise its spiny arms except in the rare depressions of extinct water courses. But now the train had come to a halt that promised to be protracted. The passengers were leaving the cars, and from my window I observed what appeared to be a party organizing to scale a nearby hill. Already two girls were a hundred yards from the tracks; and headed toward the same hill, if not directly following, were most of the younger male passengers.

"Did you ever see such fools?" asked the Omaha lady who occupied the seat facing mine. But then she had all along borne an unaccountable grudge against those two girls now climbing with shrieks of laughter from rock to rock. To my mind they made up a very pretty picture,

with their hair of miraculous blond hue, their red blouses and green skirts lighting up the desolate hillside. What if their eyes were a little too innocently blue, their cheeks a little too radiantly pink, on close inspection?

"It's no use sitting here indefinitely," I said, rising.

"I suppose you'll climb the hill too?" queried the Omaha lady contemptuously.

"I might, if it weren't so hot and I weren't so lazy," I replied. "But I'm going to see the town."

"Town? Huh!"

The conductor stood in the shadow of the car, beside the little pedestal that helps you to alight.

"How long are we to be here?" I inquired.

"Lord knows. There has been a washout up the track."

"Washout!" I exclaimed incredulously, scanning the hard blue sky.

"You think it never rains in this country. But it does. Once in ten years. And then, oh Lord! I've seen two feet of water in the station down there."

I looked down the track toward the station, a little stuccoed mission structure, confronted

across the track by a half dozen other buildings rising out of the hot sand. Two feet of water there? Railway men are of course always to be believed, but how did the water have a chance to accumulate? After all, that was not much more incredible than that people could actually be living here. I decided to go down the track to assure myself on this point.

The first building bore the sign, "James Black and Co. Fuel and Feed." A grim joke, one might suppose, in a place where the thermometer is fixed at 100 and where excepting horned lizards there can be no animal life whatsoever. Through the open window of the "office" I saw the lank figure of a man, uncomfortably disposed over a revolving chair, his feet on the desk before him. He appeared to be dozing, but really no one could doze in such a position.

"Hello!" I said. "How's business?"

"Go to hell!" he retorted, turning toward me with a melancholy grin. "It's right near here."

The next building, with the sign, "General Merchandise" on its front, appeared to be vacant. Indeed, there were no further signs of life until I reached the last building, a green

bungalow, opposite the station. In a hammock on the veranda a woman in a white linen dress was reading. Her hair was a luminous reddish brown, like the landscape where the sun's rays fell aslant. Somehow I could not resist the temptation to pause to gaze at it. The woman turned her face toward me.

"Why!" I exclaimed, "Estelle Ayers!"

"Estelle Ayers, that was," she replied calmly. "Haven't you forgotten that I have a husband?"

"Oh no, I remember that well enough. I've forgotten your husband's name, but I remember a lot about him. He had just inherited a wholesale hardware business, and he was going to learn the difference between a miter box and an adz."

"Yes, that is what he told you."

"But aren't you surprised over my call?"

"No. Everybody calls on one here, if one stays long enough."

"Yes, I suppose so. But how long have you been staying here?"

"Three years."

"Health, I suppose?"

"No. Bread and butter."

I gasped. Estelle Ayers, the most brilliant

girl in her college class, marooned here in the desert?

"I'll answer your question even if you don't ask it," she said. "I married money, or at any rate a lot of hardware. But Mr. Bruce and I soon exhausted all the intellectual content of the hardware business. We traded it for a newspaper, which we made educational and independent. We reported the wrong things about the right people, and lost our advertising. So we traded the paper for an academy in a western state, but the county opened a union high school in the same town. We sold the academy to the Y. M. C. A. and bought a mine. Then we decided that in this epoch of transportation we ought to attach ourselves to the railways. As Mr. Bruce said, we would get all the romance out of it by beginning at the bottom and working up. This is the bottom."

"Well, well!" cried a thin masculine voice at my elbow. "*I am* delighted." Mr. Bruce seized my hand and wrung it enthusiastically. He was a little man, with bright brown eyes and a vivacious mouth fringed with a silky black mustache. I had seen him only once before and had liked him as well as one may be expected

to like the man who carries off into matrimony a girl for whom one has predicted a brilliant career. I liked him very little now that he was proved unsuccessful, and I found myself trying to recall that I had set him down as flighty and irresponsible.

"Wonderful country this is!" he exclaimed. "The air is perfect, and such sunshine! If only we had time, I'd take you to the top of that big mountain over there."

I glanced at the mountain, a forbidding mass of burned rock.

"What would we see?" I inquired.

"Other mountains just like it," said Estelle, in a weary voice. "You see how these mountains are made? First a little hump, then a bigger one, then another hump much bigger, then one not quite so big, and finally a very little one."

I ran my eyes over the outlines of the dozen or more mountains within range of my vision.

"They are all really of a pattern," I admitted.

"Yes, do you know what Estelle calls them?" cried Mr. Bruce, laughing immoderately. "She calls them the Devil's wall paper. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll show you my farm. Come on!"

He seized my arm and led me across the railway track to a slight depression near the water tank.

“See that dripping leak?” asked Mr. Bruce with a large gesture. “Observe it well. It is the *causa causans*, the prime source. When the company sends up a gang to stop the leak, we have a drought on my farm. But the winds rock the tank until she springs a new leak, and then my farm flows with milk and honey.”

We had arrived at the farm. It was a carefully leveled space, five feet by thirty, with a conduit of old sheet iron down its center. The end nearest the track was a rich green, with beets, lettuce and onions. Half way down the vegetation became stunted and yellow, and near the farther end only a few tightly curled dry leaves gave evidence of husbandry. But at the very end of the conduit loomed a cabbage, dark green, immense, flat as a drumhead.

“See that cabbage?” cried Mr. Bruce. “Greedy fellow, he’s eaten half my water. Do you realize, that is the only cabbage growing within a hundred miles of this spot? Come up on this knoll”—Mr. Bruce leapt upon a heap of broken stone. “You get a good view of the

whole farm. Hullo! There are your fellow passengers on top of Mount Marcos. Wonderful how far you can see through this clear air. Those two girls, now; you can see their hair is yellow. My, they're jolly, aren't they? And the boys seem to be having a good time, too. Look at those bored old captains of industry sweltering beside the train. Bet they're thirsty. Oh say, I've got an idea! Let's run back to the house."

We really ran, Mr. Bruce eagerly, I protestingly. I don't like the exercise especially when I don't know why I'm running.

"Estelle!" cried Mr. Bruce excitedly. "Get me a bucket and some lemons. I'm going to refresh that crowd down by the train."

"They have plenty of lemonade in the buffet car," said Estelle.

"Not my kind." Mr. Bruce darted into the bungalow.

"Estelle! Where's the molasses?"

"Top shelf," replied Estelle. I looked at her in wonder. She shrugged her shoulders.

Presently Mr. Bruce returned to the veranda with a bucket full of a brown tinted liquid, in which a few slices of lemon were swimming. He

had discarded his coat and had donned a dusty old hat and a pair of many-wrinkled top boots. Even if you had never seen a boot-legger you would have taken him for one.

"What do you think of my lemonade?" he asked, dipping a glassful and holding it up to the light. "What does it make you think of?" He shook with suppressed laughter. "'Here gents, your nice cool lemonade. The more you drink the thirstier you get. For gents only. Ten cents a glass!' That will get the captains of industry, I guess." He set out for the train at a half trot, the bucket splashing against his leg.

For several moments neither Estelle nor I spoke. I was embarrassed, and felt that I ought to say something, but about what? Estelle wasn't embarrassed, but was taking a mild satisfaction in my helplessness.

"What are you reading?" I asked at last.

She handed me her book. It was yellow with age, apparently a thriller of an earlier generation.

"*The House on the Marsh,*" I read aloud.

"A very worthless book, you are thinking," she said quietly.

"No, who am I to pass judgment on books I have never read?"

"Well, it is really worthless. But why shouldn't I read worthless books?"

"You wrote very pretty verses in college. And I recall that encouraging letter you had from Mr. Howells on your first story. Are you writing anything now?"

"No, why should I write? As you see, I have attained my place in the sun."

Surely there was still something to be said, but I could not think what it was. So I remained silent, pretending an interest in the red burned mountain opposite, and in its blue-black shadow now lengthening across the plain. Estelle closed her eyes.

"The glare makes one's eyes very tired, in the end," she said. But that did not revive my tongue from paralysis. It was with immense relief that I espied Mr. Bruce, returning from the train with all the spirit of one of those dancing little desert whirlwinds.

"The basis of a fortune," he shouted as he ascended the steps. "Listen!" He jingled his pocket. "They bit like sandflies. There was only one insect in my ointment." He drew from

his pocket a handful of coins and picked out one of them. "Look at that."

"Why, it is a lead quarter, not even washed with silver," I said.

"If you are my friend, you'll manage to step on the foot of that big, fat captain of industry with a squint eye, after the train moves on. The rest of them were game. They'd take a swallow, make a face, then gulp it down and laugh. 'Good stuff!' they'd say; I needed a bat to keep the rest off. But that old captain of industry, confound him, emptied his glass, winked and gave me this quarter. 'Now let's both squeal,' he said, 'or you give me change.'"

"Plainly we've missed our calling," said Estelle. "Perhaps it's not too late even now to go into business, at the bottom."

Mr. Bruce laughed joyously, and ran across the track to the station. As for me, I was again puzzling about what to say, as if that in the least mattered. I was delivered from my perplexity by the sound of the locomotive bell and a long drawn "All aboard" from the conductor.

"Good-by, Estelle," I said, offering my hand.

"Good-by," said Estelle impassively, picking

up *The House on the Marsh* with her disengaged hand.

The passengers were again on board. All the younger men and some not so young had crowded into my car around the two girls who had led the expedition to the hilltop. All had discarded their surnames and were evidently bent on a most sociable time. The Omaha lady facing me looked grim as an Aztec figurine. Slowly the train began to move. As it passed the station I watched for the chance of another glimpse of Estelle. She was standing at the edge of the veranda, facing the east, from which a strong wind was blowing. What had become of her passivity? With the wind in her hair and garments, she seemed a symbol of life just awakening.

Some months later I wrote to Estelle, with a literary project as pretext. But my letter was returned to me unopened by Mr. Bruce, with the statement that Estelle was visiting friends in the East, and he had unfortunately mislaid the card with her address. The air was simply glorious, he added, and he was expecting to enlarge his farm, as the water tank was leaking exuberantly.

III

A Sympathetic Strike

HE was a pockmarked Jew, crinkly-haired, with features set pugnaciously; but peacefully enough sipping his rye and soda over the foam-stained bar. It was late and business was slow; the very lights seemed depressed in their vain efforts to cheer up the dim corners of Nebbin's Palace. The Aphrodite Anadyomene lay dead upon the rear wall, and the nymphs and satyrs above the bottled goods were perishing from tedium. The host, bald, pink, enormous, undulated to and fro behind the bar as if there were an eager row of customers to serve. Presently he paused and leered at the Jew.

"Remember that coat you sold me? All the buttons busted off."

"What the devil you expect?" retorted the Jew fiercely. "You saloonkeepers get fatter and fatter; no coat could hold you. Look at you, now—bearing down all over you. You're a fine one to fit."

The saloonkeeper chuckled uncomfortably. "Where are you now, Leo? I heard that you were leaving Erismann's."

"Me leaving? No, I went on strike. That's what you heard. Tell you about it. You remember Baruch? No—he never spent a cent in such a place as this. Awful nice fellow, Baruch is. He had a sick wife and four little children, and the boss paid him eighteen dollars a week. Paid me thirty-six, because I'm single and don't need the job. Every dollar the boss spends in wages has got to produce six. That's his principle. But every dollar he spent on Baruch produced twelve. Baruch had to be thankful for anything, with his sick wife and little children. He worked awful hard, jumping out on the street and dragging in customers and holding them till the boss could sell them.

"Well, Baruch's wife got worse and had to go to the madhouse, and Baruch couldn't keep from crying sometimes. And the boss didn't like it: 'How can I sell a customer with that fellow pulling his long face around?' In the busy time he stood for it, but so soon as the slack time came, Baruch came to me, and he said, 'The boss is going to lay me off three days

in the week. I can't feed my little children on nine dollars, let alone the railway fare to see my wife, poor woman, so lonesome among all those nuts.'

"I got pretty hot. I went to the boss, and I said, 'What you want to lay Baruch off for, poor devil, with his four little children and his wife in the madhouse? You are certainly a good Jew! You ought to be out in the cemetery with a marble canopy over your head, where the other good Jews are.'

"'You Jew yourself, throwing it up to me,' he yelled. 'You shut up or I'll lay him off entirely! If you had any business in you, you'd see I got to cut my costs in these slack times. Here I got expenses of two hundred and fifty dollars a week. Where is the money coming from? You tell me, you smart Jew. How many customers did Baruch drag in to-day? Three. And what did I sell them? One twenty-cent tie and two pair of Boston garters.'

"'If you got to save money,' I said, 'why don't you lay me off? Lay me off two days and you'll save more money than on Baruch's three days. I can get along. Lay me off three days if you want to.' Then I began to get excited.

‘Hell, lay me off four days, five days, six days! I don’t want to work for a good Jew like you, that takes the bread out of a poor devil’s mouth because he is in trouble.’

“ ‘Yes, see if you can get another job these slack times!’ yelled the boss. ‘You’ll come back here to-night, and I’ll lay you off three days, and fire Baruch.’

“Well, I went over to the store opposite, and they said, ‘Yes, we’ll take you, same pay.’ But I don’t like the boss, and so I go down the street to another store and they say, ‘Times are slack, but you got lots of customers you can take away from Erismann: we’ll take you on.’ I make up my mind to see what I can do in other stores, and some of them wanted me and some didn’t. At night I come back to Erismann’s and I say to the boss:

“ ‘Boss, I want you to tell me which of these six jobs I got offered to me is the best?’

“ ‘Six jobs!’ he yelled. ‘Yes, you got six jobs! Everybody wanted a pocky Jew like you, of course.’

“ ‘There’s the list,’ I said. ‘Call them up if you want to.’

“The boss looked at my list. ‘Say, Leo, what

you want a new job for? Haven't you got a job enough here? Ain't I always been good to you? Don't I take things from you another boss wouldn't take?'

" 'How about Baruch?'

" 'Well, I've changed my mind about laying him off. Poor devil, with his four little children, and wife in the madhouse! He ain't worth much now, but I guess we can afford it.' "

The saloonkeeper yawned. Leo threw down a Canada dime and a misshapen nickel, and shambled out into the darkness.

"Lord," said the saloonkeeper. "Ain't it awful to have to listen to 'em? And his trade here ain't worth fifty cents a month."

IV

The Killing of Different Man

NOT that he was so very unlike you or me, even if he was a Reservation Indian, tried and found guilty of murder by twelve good men and true (and white), and lying in Minnecadusa jail waiting to be hanged. When his mother first opened her eyes after the burst of anguish that gave him light, they fell upon a man other than one she had expected to see. And so he came by his name of Different Man, instead of Rainbow-on-the-Hill, or White-Faced Bull, or other name to appeal to the Indian amateurs of the Eastern seaboard.

I had known Different Man from the time he was a gawky boy of fourteen, with the legs of his jeans stopping short half-way down his spare brown calves. He never amounted to much. He would come into my store and try to get goods on credit, especially tobacco and New Orleans molasses. He had a sweet tooth, and he would stand at the counter and beg: "My

uncle, he send me for tobacco; one-half plug, Climax. Please. My uncle, he sick, must have tobacco, Climax. He pay Monday; he come to store. One-half plug, Climax, please."

"Go 'way, you trifler; you haven't got any uncle. Can't get any tobacco here. Go up to my house and chop half a cord of wood. I'll give you a whole plug and some molasses, too." His jaw would drop and his eyes would take on a sad blue-black hue. He hated work more than he loved tobacco and molasses. He knew I kept a pile of dry ash wood especially for him. He never seemed to bear a grudge against me for it, though one day, when his dog snapped at me, he said, "My dog, his heart is bad because you won't give me tobacco for my uncle."

Everybody, Indian and white, thought he was a good-for-nothing, but that didn't trouble Sunshine-in-the-Eyes. She was a likely girl, not so very homely when you're used to Indians. Her mother, a frightful old squaw, looked higher, and set the dogs on Different Man and tore him up considerably. He was not discouraged, however, and one dark night he crept up and stole the girl right out of the hut while the old squaw slept. He hadn't even a tepee for his bride, but

it was May, and they lived in the willows for several weeks. When June rains came on they would sneak into town, and I would let them have a blanket for the night in the back of my store.

One morning Different Man left the girl in the store and went to the other end of the town to clean out a stable. He wanted to earn a dollar to pay me for some green beads Sunshine-in-the-Eyes had cajoled out of me. I told him they were a gift, but he would not have it so. As soon as he was well out of sight, in came the old squaw. She had known all along that they were coming to my store, though they had thought they were making a successful secret of it. I told the squaw the girl had gone, but she said I lied, and started to go through the store. I tried to put her out, but whew! And such a scene as there was when she dragged her daughter from behind the flour barrels! Finally the girl gave in and let herself be led down to the river, where her mother put her into a canoe and slipped off down-stream. Different Man came back at noon. I told him what had happened, and he crumpled up and said, "My heart is bad." I gave him a drink—it wasn't lawful, of

course, but I couldn't help it—and he started off on a trot down the river.

About a week later I heard that he had found them, and had smashed in the old squaw's skull with a club. Next day the officers got him at a dance. He had a fair trial; nothing to object to, except perhaps that they brought in two of his enemies, Black Bull and Walking Squirrel, to testify falsely to his bad character. I hoped they would let him off with life imprisonment, considering the provocation, but the law wasn't taking any chances with bad Indians. So he was sentenced to be hanged between the 10th and 25th of September. I suppose they put it in that way to make a sheriff earn his money. How does a man feel when he gets up in the morning if he is obliged to say to himself, "Well, shall I go out and hang him this morning, or shall I put it off till to-morrow?"

On the 24th of September I went down to Minnecadusa on business and put up at the hotel. That evening a man came to my room and introduced himself as the sheriff. I said I didn't know that I cared if he was a sheriff; I hadn't been doing anything unlawful recently. He grinned in a sickly way and said he wanted

to ask a favor of me. He understood I'd come from the Reservation and knew most of the Indians; would I go over to the jail with him and tell Different Man it was going to be the next day? I didn't like it, but the sheriff was plainly all gone to pieces, so I went. Different Man shouted with joy as I entered his cell. He took my hand and wouldn't let it go, and inquired about the agency, and asked how my wife and babies were—he had been devoted to my family. Then he said: "The men here are all liars. They have two tongues, one for me and one for themselves. I ask them, 'When are you going to kill me?' They say, 'Pretty soon, maybe.' You have one tongue, Mr. Spenser. Tell me, when will they kill me?"

"To-morrow, Different Man."

"Good."

It hadn't been so very difficult, after all. I returned to the hotel and went to bed, but I wasn't very sleepy, so I got up and lit a cigar and started in on an old Chicago paper I found in my closet. I read it through about four times before I began to feel sleepy, and then it was nearly morning. I was just dozing off when there was a knock at my door.

"Mr. Spenser! Say, Mr. Spenser! I'm going to do it now. Won't you please come along?"

"For God's sake," I said, "go and kill your Indian yourself. It's not my job."

"I'm sick, and I ain't sure I can get through with it. I never hung a man. I wouldn't have run for this damn office if I'd thought I'd have to. I've tried to get a deputy, but there ain't a man will do the job."

I was feeling pretty cross. A mighty big imposition, to ask that sort of thing of a perfect stranger. But I knew the sheriff would stay around until I came out of my room, even if the execution had to be postponed until sundown. So I dressed, took a nip from my flask, and went out into the hall. The sheriff was waiting, all huddled up on a settee. What a state he was in!

When we got to the jail he gave me the key to the cell; he wanted to stay in the fresh air. As I opened the door of the cell Different Man leaped from his cot and greeted me gaily. He was smoking a cigar, pulling it for dear life.

"Have you come to kill me?"

"Yes."

He took the cigar from his lips and looked at it regretfully. Two-thirds unfinished, and life so

short! "Give it to the man in the other cell," he said. "I don't need it."

"Have you any message you want me to take, Different Man? Anything you want to leave to anybody?"

The Indian reflected a moment. "Yes." I sharpened my pencil.

"You, Black Bull, you big liar, you, I 'queathe and devise to you one section good land, with house and barn and hay land, if you find him. You, Walking Squirrel, you big liar, I 'queathe and devise to you one two-horse wagon and one span mules, if you find him. You, Sunshine-in-the-Eyes, you left me; my heart is bad. I 'queathe and devise to you my sorrel pony, and my saddle and bridle. My heart is bad. My head is good. I die."

It puzzled Different Man that I should take so long about folding up a bit of paper.

"Different Man," I said, drawing a cord from my pocket, "the sheriff asked me to tie your hands behind your back."

"All right." He turned his back to me and threw back his arms, firm and warm.

"Come on, now," I said, praying that the business might be finished before I reached a state

equivalent to the sheriff's. We struck across the yard, the sheriff falling in behind us. Different Man ascended the steps of the scaffold, light as a bird. I helped the sheriff to mount them.

"We've got to tie his legs together," whispered the sheriff, gasping. "Here, take this rope."

I wouldn't touch it. The sheriff knelt beside Different Man and put the rope around his legs. The Indian looked down in grave surprise. "Are you going to hang me by the feet?"

"No," I explained. "We have to tie your legs together so you won't kick so. It looks awful, you know."

"Oh!" One of the white man's peculiar deencies, to be accepted like life or death.

"I never can tie that damn knot," wailed the sheriff. "Please, Mr. Spenser——"

Well, I tied the knot. Different Man's legs stood like bronze columns as I drew the rope about them. Mine did not.

We got the job off, somehow. If you must know, it was I that killed Different Man. That worthless sheriff couldn't get the mask over his head—a perfectly simple operation when you're doing it, horrible when it's done. Next there

was the noose. Of course, I had to take it off the sheriff's hands. Finally I had to spring the trap, and had to hold the sheriff from jumping off the scaffold as I did it.

I don't know how it seems to you, but it somehow doesn't seem right to me. Did I execute Different Man, or did I just kill him? It seems to me I killed him. Maybe it wouldn't seem so hideous to me if I had killed him while the crime was still fresh in him and while vengeance was still hot in my heart. But after three months no living soul had a thing against Different Man, and his crime had had time to ooze out of him. He was again just the same Indian, of no account, trifling but square enough, that I had known for ten years.

And maybe it would seem all right to me if I had been a duly constituted officer of the law. If that sheriff had made me his deputy—something he couldn't possibly have done. . . . Suppose, though, that I had accepted the post of deputy. I could pretend that not I, but the law, killed Different Man. But as it is, I have nothing whatever to hide behind. I broke the neck of a man, not by any means the worst man I've known, a man who looked upon me as his friend.

Why? Just to oblige another man, not very much of a man, either; a man I had never seen before that September evening, and never want to see again.

V

Forbidden Fruit

IF you could spy upon Margaret as she sits in her tiny study, a deeply serious, widely acclaimed modern book open before her on the leaf of her desk, I wonder what you would surmise—supposing, that is, you are given to surmises about women. She isn't really reading, although the stiff words of the page print themselves dimly upon her consciousness, along with the blacks and reds of the mahogany grain of her desk, where a long ray of December sun lights it into a rich glow. Margaret's brow is contracted in thought and her lips, sweet and firm, appear full of suppressed emotion. There is a deliciously baffling trace of color in her pale cheeks, a color which seems to ebb and flow with the waves of her thought. She sits free and well poised in her chair, like a woman with unusual strength of body and activity of mind. Her figure, neither slender nor full, suggests power, awaiting the summons to action. From some-

thing about the cut and color of her dress and the way she does her hair, you infer that her age falls in the early forties. But another glance and you dismiss the inference: she may be twenty-five or thirty-five or forty: it is all one. She is woman, life and strength and goodness, more potential than actual. She is woman eternal.

But now the street door opens and closes, and a slight, habitual cough is heard in the reception hall. Observe the subtle change that takes place in Margaret. The glow of the mahogany grain dies out of her consciousness and the color out of her cheeks. The pose of free strength has fallen from her body; she leans half wearily against the back of her chair. Her lips move pronouncing the dogmatic nothings of the page before her. Plainly, she is forty or more, and a wife. And if you are at all quick, you can infer the type of husband, before the study door is gently opened and he stands before his lady, tall, spare, a kindly light in his dim eyes, an enforced cheerfulness of voice and countenance. He is apparently somewhat older than his wife, not so sound of constitution nor so generous of spirit, but a good soul nevertheless. He wears a

general professional appearance, which narrows down on close inspection to that of professor, probably, on closer inspection still, professor of science. And as you look at this wedded pair you feel the mood of one of those dim days in early September, when the summer glory has gone out of the foliage, but the colors of autumn have not arrived.

The professor strides over-lithely to Margaret's side and kisses her cheek. He glances at the book, " 'Not only are the conscious discriminations between our kinæsthetic ideas' "—he intones. "Very deep, very deep," he comments, with a tone of forced raillery. "Am I disturbing you?"

"No, not at all," says Margaret languidly. But the professor is not blind enough to remain. He remarks cheerfully on some pressing work he has to do and betakes himself off, revealing his unconfessed dejection only by that slight outward curve in the small of the back which in rigidly self-drilled persons does duty for an infinitude of sighs.

Now, what do you surmise about Margaret, supposing you are given to surmises? Whether she would admit it even to herself, her soul

yearns for forbidden fruit. This is elementary. But what fruit? That is where canny surmises go astray.

Margaret is not disillusioned of her husband the professor. They climbed the hill of life together, and she would not forego any part of the experience for worlds, not the painful readjustment of life when Helen, their daughter, suddenly changed from a child into a woman and set out to train herself for a career in a distant city; not even the devastating anguish of a son born in hope, reared in joy through the first year of inarticulate wonder, and lost. Neither would Margaret forego for worlds the final community of the journey of life, descending the hill together. But the vast flat space between up grade and down, that is Margaret's problem. It used to be that there was only a breathing stage between the time when a woman is young and the time when she is old. Modern hygiene, the modern outlook on life, have extended this stage incredibly into a wide plateau. At forty is not one's mind as alert, one's will as strong, one's body as enduring as at any earlier stage in life? And need one's faculties, one's impulses to activity, decline notably before seventy? It was

not so with Bernhardt, nor with Terry, nor with a long array of distinguished women artists. It is not so with the average man; why should it be with the average woman? But thirty years is a long age to contemplate for one whose whole profession consists in the status of wife in a household whence the last birdlet has flown.

"You are all worn out, my dear," the professor is in the habit of insisting sympathetically. "Helen's last year in the high school taxed you more than you realize. Now you must try to rest." Rest! There will be time enough for that when one is dead. But when one is alive, when in fact one is tingling, quivering with life that demands expression, what is the meaning of rest? The professor is not so stupid, to be sure, as to advise Margaret to sit with hands folded, drinking in rest. He addresses himself very seriously to the problem of finding means for occupying Margaret's time restfully. He has inveigled her into some honorary office connected with a sorority, by means of which she can devote hours and hours to hearing the pseudo-confidences of twenty young ladies who keep their real confidences for younger ears. He presses her to attend his colleagues' lectures and report

on them, on the pretext that only so can he gain a comprehensive view of the whole course of instruction. He brings home books, books, books. And naturally after America entered the war, the professor employed all the craft of a politician to get Margaret on one committee on war work after another, until Margaret's week was nothing but a succession of committee meetings and extra-committee activities. And yet you can read in Margaret's every movement, Life is empty, empty. The professor can't quite read this, but he lives ill at ease. Is some deeply hidden malady sapping the spirit and the life of his beloved wife? The medical fraternity of the town have been called into consultation, but they can find nothing. But suppose he had access to more expert medical service, would the results be equally negative? Pity the poor professor. There is nothing in the world more real than the solicitude that gnaws at his heart.

From plague and fire on land, from wreck at sea and from unreasonable, discontented wives, good Lord deliver us. Thus no doubt you pray; and having prayed, let us return to Margaret, seated before her desk, her eyes absently resting

upon the selfsame page of meaningless profundities. Exactly what is it that so tyrannizes over her consciousness? Yes, to be sure, a human face.

It is the face of a gentle little Italian woman, Giulia Pellerino, who lives in the tumble-down cottage beyond the lumber yard. Giulia's is a lovely face, oval, olive pale, with the greatest, profoundest eyes, half veiled with pain. Clustering about the face of Giulia are three miraculous little heads, Pietro, aged three, with splendid black curls and deep violet eyes; Elena, nearly two, with thinner curls and larger, darker eyes, and Giovanni, three months, almost all eyes. Since Giovanni was born Giulia has not been well. She ought not to walk about, but the Pellerino budget can provide neither nurse nor maid. Pietro senior goes to his work early and returns late; he is earning some money and saving it; he has a keen eye to the future. He is kind and does not make it too manifest that he considers himself a very unfortunate man to have a sickly wife.

"Now, if I could put in a trained nurse there and keep that little Italian woman in bed, and straighten out the children's diet, and bully the

husband a bit, it would come out all right," says Dr. Baker, Margaret's medical counselor.

"But why can't I do all those things without being a trained nurse?" demands Margaret.

"Because you are nothing to such people but an idle woman who has come down to spy and pry and regulate. You would hurt Giulia more than you'd help her. You have to have professional standing. That is the only key to communication across class and race lines. But if you had it, think what it would mean to people like these. What a nurse you'd make! You'd save me a dozen lives a year."

What would it mean to Margaret? That, is what she has been thinking, month after month. If only she could! All her life desire to help has been her ruling passion. To devote the rest of her life altogether to helpfulness would entirely solve her problem. But think of the obstacles!

In the first place, what institution wants to train women of forty? There are just as many illusions now current about the incapacity of the mature woman for severe training as used to be current about woman's incapacity in general. Those illusions will pass, but for the present

there is a difficult road for any woman who challenges them, and Margaret is not of a challenging type.

And, then, there is the professor to think of. He is broad-minded, in his way, and sympathetic, but his conceptions of human nature are traditional. If Margaret were to announce her conviction that something besides conjugal love is needed to fill up a woman's life, the professor would take it as a judgment of his own personal inadequacy. So would the community. And would it be right for Margaret to place a just and kind husband in so humiliating a position, even though the humiliation springs from nothing but illusions?

If what Margaret wanted to do were to write, or to paint pictures, or to enact significant rôles on the stage, it would not be so difficult a matter. It is already agreed that a woman may, without repudiating her husband, sacrifice her home life to such ambitions. But to make the sacrifice just to be humbly useful, to accept a status in a professional hierarchy supposed to be on a lower plane than her husband's—for this there is not sufficient precedent. As well dismiss the thought and reconcile herself to rest-

ing to the end of her days, or to making pretense of occupying herself with the innumerable amateur social and charitable activities of the community.

If only her husband had been of a different temperament. If he had been like that disagreeable college mate of his, Geoffrey Blake, obstreperous social philosopher at large, who goes about the country, proclaiming the most fervent admiration for fair women and the most profound contempt for their tolerance of the futility of their lives. After all, Margaret reflects, is not the contempt justified?

The door opens noiselessly and the professor appears, smiling.

"Guess who's in town. I've invited him to come to dinner. Geoffrey Blake."

"Geoffrey Blake? I don't want to see him!" cries Margaret vehemently.

The professor stares. Margaret's cheeks begin to glow, and a disquieting surmise passes through the professor's mind like a flash of lightning in December.

"No," he comments to himself. "It can't be that. He's such a brute. But yet, psychology is tricky. Forbidden fruit, and all that."

VI

The Lot of the Inventor

"THIEVES! Sharks! Muttonheads!"

I had not been aware of my companion, except for a dim, uninterested recognition of the fact that a tall man, very Yankee in outline, had remained with me on the upper deck of the Sound boat when all the other passengers had fled below to escape a few drops of rain. Soliloquizing, however, is nearly a lost art, and naturally excites one's attention. I turned my chair so as to command a good view of the soliloquist, who was leaning against the rail and looking toward the great glow of light on the western clouds that indicated the direction of New York.

"Thieves! Scoundrels! Idiots!"

The soliloquist's voice was low, and I could catch only the words of special emphasis. Why should a man be hurling such epithets at the cloudy halo of New York? Was it drink? No. There was a certain erectness in the man's carriage, a certain angularity in his lines, that be-

spoke the total abstainer. Was it a woman? No. His face had the texture of one shaved only once a week and his clothes were such as are selected by men who find difficulty in remembering that there are women in the universe. Was he a bit out of joint mentally? Apparently not. He had a very fine, smooth brow, an aquiline nose and formidable chin, and his eyes were as round and gray and piercing as an eagle's.

"Pirates! Bandits!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," I ventured. "You seem to be thinking of New York. I'm interested."

He turned to me with a look of surprise. "New York? Yes, I was thinking of New York. Den of spiders. Old fat fellows; they sit there and spin and watch, and we fool flies go buzzing up to them to get sucked out. That's how New York lives."

"Perhaps," I replied doubtfully. "But I've lived in New York, and it never occurred to me I was a spider."

"You weren't. You were just one of the spider's parasites. That is the way with most New Yorkers. Here is how it is. New York doesn't produce anything. But from all over the

country men who have found means of producing something—mines, railway projects, inventions—come in a steady stream to New York, to get robbed. That's where your big fellows make their money. Of course they have to divide up with their friends and relatives, with the politicians, real-estate men, hotel keepers and such. And then these divide up with fellows still further down, who have to dance like the dickens to get their shares, and think they earn them. That's you. But just the same, all the money really comes from those muttonheads that keep coming in from the country with ideas, to be robbed. That's me."

"So they robbed you?"

"That's just what they did." He seated himself in the chair beside me. "Now, I'll tell you just how they did it: Maybe you can learn to be a spider yourself, and not just a parasite. Suppose you have an idea to sell, an idea with millions in it, and you can prove it. You have a letter from your local banker to, say, Mr. Clinton. Says Mr. Clinton, 'Sorry, but there's too much risk in your proposition. I'll give you a card to Mr. Schultz.' It takes you three or four days to find Mr. Schultz. Says Mr. Schultz:

‘Your idea may have something in it, but I can’t see it. But I’ll make an appointment for you with Mr. Loewe.’ You’re a week in finding Mr. Loewe. Says Mr. Loewe, ‘Excuse me, but I am terribly pestered with cranks who think they have valuable ideas. But I’ll give you just one minute: what have you got to sell? No, don’t go. I’ll give you a letter to Mr. McGrath.’ In time you find Mr. McGrath. He hears you through, and says he doesn’t see how he can do anything, but he’ll see you again Monday week, three o’clock sharp. You come at three, and he keeps you waiting until five. He’s been thinking over your proposition, he says, and he’s a gambler, he’s willing to take a chance, even if everybody will call him a fool for doing it. So he has fixed up a scheme, with bonds and first preferred stock and second preferred and common and God knows what else; all you’ve got to do is to put down your name. You’re pretty discouraged by this time and ready to take anything. You come away, figuring that your idea will have to earn nineteen dollars for McGrath for every one it earns for you, and McGrath gets his nineteen dollars first. That’s rough, but when you begin really to get mad is

when you find that McGrath and Loewe and Schultz and Clinton are partners, and have run you about from office to office just to break your spirit and lower your price."

"Still," I objected, "these men are putting up their money and if the project fails they will suffer a material loss. All you will actually suffer is the disappointment of an idea proved worthless."

"There's where you're entirely wrong. Why, I spent over \$100,000 on the preliminary work. What do you think McGrath and the rest are putting up? Just \$50,000. It's a million dollar corporation, but the idea itself has to make up the rest of the capital. I get half a million of common stock. Come on. I'll show you something."

I followed him to his stateroom. He opened a black leather bag and produced a handful of little square samples of cloth. "What's this one?"

"Some kind of canvas," I guessed.

"What's this?"

"Worsted." I plucked at the threads trying to appear expert. "Not all wool, I should judge."

“What’s this?” It was a fine white cloth and felt gritty as you rolled it between your fingers.

“Irish linen?”

“And this?” It was the most gossamer-like fabric I had ever seen. Silk, of course, but what kind?

“It looks very much like a Formosan silk,” I ventured.

“Well, you’re wrong on all of them. They’re all wood pulp. That’s the idea I’ve been trying to sell.”

“Why, that’s impossible,” I replied. “Look at these ravelings. They are natural fiber, that’s plain. You couldn’t possibly make fibers of this strength out of wood pulp.”

“And why not? Can’t I work with the same molecular material nature works with? I can’t arrange it in cells, but can’t I produce a molecular arrangement having equal cohesive power? Haven’t I got an advantage over nature in the matter of binders? I can use any that gives increased strength; nature has to limit herself to those that won’t kill cell growth. That’s why I can make a stronger and finer fiber than nature can possibly make.” He handed me the sample of gossamer texture. “Tear it.”

I tore the sample. It was real silk. The invention was a fake, I was convinced.

"How cheap can you make these fabrics?" I inquired politely.

"The woolen, linen, and coarse cottons I can make for almost nothing. You see, I don't have to weave them. I make them just like paper and imitate the texture of cloth. See this sample. Unravel it if you can."

I plucked at the thread ends in a piece of flannel. They refused to run even a millimeter. I tore the sample. The rent followed zigzag lines.

"Heavens!" I exclaimed. "What is going to happen to the cotton and woolen industries?"

"Well, I had figured they'd have to stop planting cotton. Cotton would become a weed, and those farmers down South would be thanking God for the boll weevil. As for wool, I figured that the agricultural colleges would have to breed up a naked sheep. But those New York financiers have fixed all that. They aren't going to allow me to make any of the cheap stuffs. We're going to concentrate on this fine cloth, which is dearer than silk. They don't care to make good warm suits so cheap that poor people

would never need to go cold or ragged. No, it's the demand of the rich they are after, and to get it, we've got to keep my invention out of reach of the poor. Dudes will get thinner socks, fine ladies will get thinner waists than they've ever worn before. And that's all I've accomplished, by my twenty years of work. Your financiers have turned me into just a silk worm."

The inventor paused dejectedly for a moment. Then his face brightened. "Well, I don't care much about that invention, anyway. I can't keep up much interest in an invention, once it's done. My weakness. I've got a garret full of inventions I've never even tried to sell. There's just one thing in the world I'm interested in, and that's leather."

He opened his bag and produced a long strip of black leather. "What do you think of that for artificial leather?"

I manipulated the strip suspiciously.

"You've given me the wrong sample," I said. "This is real leather."

"What makes you think so?"

"The smell."

"Oh, I imitated that. When I first made this leather it was odorless. But your financiers said

that wouldn't do. So I told them I could make it smell as bad as they pleased. You know what this smell is? Diluted Russian glue and quebracho extract."

I bent the sample and twisted it, and, by permission, cut off a corner of it, without arriving at certainty.

"If this isn't real leather," I said, "it's a wonderful invention. It would deceive anybody. But will it wear?"

"Wear? This bag is made of it. Look at it. I've carried it around for three years."

I took the bag and turned it round and round, looking for scratches or cracks. Not one. It might have been carried around for three years, but there seemed to be no reason for believing it.

"You must handle your baggage very carefully," I said. "Now if I were to smash this bag against the edge of the door, as a porter might, the leather would crack, wouldn't it?"

"I don't think it would. No, don't try it. You probably don't see many men of my kind, and don't realize what kind of chemical compounds we're likely to be working with when we're on problems like this. High explosives, a lot of them. Let me tell you about an incident

that happened to me six years ago. I went down to New York to try to interest the financiers in my leather. Of course they wouldn't believe in it; thought they could buy it from me for nothing. And when I held out they tried to find all kinds of fault with it. 'It's too brittle, you couldn't cover a square corner with it,' they'd say. And I'd call their attention to my bag. Well, what do you think? One of those impudent old money bags walked right over to my bag and gave it a kick. Bang! Off went his foot! See," he rolled up his sleeve, "here's where the heel of his shoe hit me. Well, sir, that set me back years. There wasn't a financier that would let me come near him."

"It's wonderful how those financiers hang together," I remarked, depositing the bag very gently on the floor and wishing myself far away, on dry land.

"Yes, isn't it? If they'd given me a chance, I'd have revolutionized the whole leather business by this time. I can imitate every kind of leather there is, and I can make an entirely new product as superior to natural leather as natural leather is superior to paper. I can make you a pair of shoes, without seams, for twenty-five

cents, and I can imitate the seams for a fraction of a cent more. For ten cents I can make working gloves that will last a year and the finest kid gloves for twenty-five cents. But do you suppose they will let me do it? ”

“ No, of course not,” I admitted. “ There are the cattlemen and the beef trust and the shoe-machinery trust and the shoe factories. Your artificial leather would produce a terrible commercial crisis.”

“ Yes, that’s what they say. But let me show you something they do let me make.” He drew from his pocket what looked like a handful of little buff buttons. On closer examination I saw that they were leather washers, concave on one side, and nearly hemispherical on the other.

“ What do they use those for? ” I asked.

“ Hanged if I know. I was working on a machine for something else and I saw it would make these things. So I ran off a few dozen of them, just for fun, and sent them around to my friends. I got a letter from a big concern in New York asking me to call when I came down. I went around there yesterday, and what do you think? They gave me \$10,000 for that machine.” He drew from his bill case a paper for

my perusal. It was the contract of conveyance of the patent.

"Ten thousand dollars for a machine to make these little things," I reflected aloud. "Real money? Did they let you take all that money away from New York?"

"That's what they did. You've been doubting me all along, just like a financier. You're in doubt about that money now. Do you know \$1,000 bills when you see them?"

"My hands are up," I admitted. "Who can doubt a man who carries ten of these bills around in his pocket? Still, I should think it would be easier for you to imitate ten thousand dollars than to get it for those tiny washers."

The inventor rolled the washers around in his palm. "What I've got in here"—he tapped his forehead—"is the clothing and shoes of the world. What they let me make is a little thing like this, good for God knows what. Queer, isn't it, that this is all the use they can find for a man like me."

I rose. Suddenly the cloud passed from the inventor's face and he was again erect, buoyant.

"Come and see me in Boston. I'll show you something superb. It's a motor. Those French-

men think they've got miracles of motors on their aeroplanes. Wait till they see mine; the best motors they've got will be junk. Say, she's a beauty! She generates twice the power and weighs half as much."

"But they won't let you make it," I suggested pessimistically.

"That's where you're wrong. I'm not touching your financiers. I don't have to: I've got the British government on the string. There'll be no monkey business this time. It's for use in war."

VII

After the Penitentiary

“JAILBIRDS have no call to kick.” That is what the editor of the Thompsonville *Courier* said to me when I offered to let his readers know how a dead middle-western village seems to a graduate from an up-to-date penitentiary. It may be that you feel the same way as the editor. When I confess to four years behind me “in the service of the state,” you’ll be justified in inferring that it was for something pretty crooked. I am twenty-three; so you may be sure my lawyer played up my extreme youth to the best of his ability. Also, I got the benefit of the usual sentimentalism about neglected childhood, the force of circumstances, and social responsibility. When the judge slapped four years on me, I felt I was getting off rather easy. I’d been a bad egg, and for all you know I may still be a bad egg. I never was a liar, though, or a romancer. And so you can take my account of Thompsonville as something just as near the truth as I can make it.

When you first strike Thompsonville, you think it is the sweetest place in the world. It is at the end of a branch line, and there is one accommodation train every day except Sunday. For the rest of the time the old town can sleep, for all anybody cares, in the bend of its little river, with deep pools where you catch the catfish with your hands, when the water is low. The streets are roofed over with the branches of maple and sycamore trees, and the houses, mostly one story, with bay windows and kitchen ells, stand in a green twilight. The sun doesn't get into the town at all except on Main Street, where the farm horses have gnawed the bark off the trees in front of the grocery stores and the blacksmith shop. The elms and sycamores follow the highways out into the country and down the lanes to the farm-houses and barns, which they smother with their branches. All the people here, except those who have to work in the fields, look pale and pudgy, like the boys in the penitentiary in the days of the cell system. There's a lot of sickness here, too. A man from a well-run penitentiary wouldn't dare to live in one of those dark, musty houses on River Street, or even in one of the older farm-houses. For-

tunately for me, my friend the philanthropist who planted me here to be redeemed, got me a job on a rather new farm near the village, where the shade trees haven't had time to grow very large. The sun gets into my windows in the morning. It might be there all day if the farmer's wife didn't come in as soon as I'm out at work, and close the blinds and draw the shades. Thompsonville hates the sun.

My employer, Mr. Harding, is one of the best-hearted men you ever saw, and I don't believe there is a kinder woman in the world than his wife. They are both about fifty and never had any children. They promised the philanthropist to treat me like a son, and that is exactly how they have treated me. They never refer to my past, and do their best to discourage me from referring to it. They had intended to keep it entirely dark, and were unhappy when they found that I had let it out. They run a mixed farm, and try to raise almost everything, a little corn, a few potatoes, a little garden stuff, some cows, pigs and chickens. It is a fussy, frittering kind of business. On Mr. Harding's farm you get up before the sun and wake up the cows to milk them. Then you go around and wake up

the horses and the pigs to feed them. You eat breakfast before you are entirely awake yourself, and then go out into the field and work a little while at one thing and a little while at another. In that way you fill up a very long day, never doing any real work. At the penitentiary they tried to teach us to work hard while we were at it. Our boss made us see that work isn't very tiresome if you make real progress with what you are doing. Mr. Harding has just the opposite view. Whenever he catches me swinging my hoe or ax as if I wanted to get the work done, he gives me a little sermon about haste making waste. I've discovered that he thinks of work as something made chiefly to fill up the time. So we keep going from five in the morning until nine at night, spinning out work we could easily do in eight hours. The other farmers around Thompsonville do just the same thing, and so do the better families down in the village. They think it keeps them out of mischief.

When Mr. Harding and I work side by side, hoeing corn or milking cows, we hardly ever find a word to say. Mr. Harding never heard of sociology and doesn't want to hear of it. He

won't talk religion because he thinks everybody has a right to his own religion, and he won't talk politics because he thinks nobody knows anything about it except what the newspapers say, and they are full of lies. He won't even gossip; it's against his principles. Mrs. Harding is the same way, and at meals we never say anything but "Pass the molasses, please," or "How do you like this coffee? It's two cents cheaper." For a man who has been through a modern penitentiary, this is living like the dumb brutes. In the penitentiary we were always talking about something interesting. We had theories about personal responsibility for crime, about the influence of environment, what the state ought to do to keep young fellows out of crime, and what it could do with us after we had served our time. Of course there were some fellows with funny ideas, like Reddy McMahan, who thought the federal government ought to regulate the locksmith's trade, so there wouldn't be so many easy locks to tempt poor boys, and Shorty Higgs, who argued that they ought to hang a few pickpockets on the main street, as an example to beginners. But there were lots of good ideas floating round the penitentiary. We knew

pretty well what they do with our likes in England and Sweden and Siberia, and how the courts manage things in France and Italy, and how the military settle their crooks.

Not that there isn't talking enough going on down in the village. There is all the gossip you care to hear, but it's dreadfully uninteresting if you haven't known the people all their lives. The farmers come in every Saturday and argue by the hour as to which are better, Holstein or Shorthorn cattle, yellow-dent corn or Great Southern White. They never get anywhere with their arguments. Nobody listens to any one but himself. Mr. Harding is just as much set in his ways as any of them. I've sometimes offered suggestions as to how we could improve our farming, but Mr. Harding always freezes me out. It was very different at the penitentiary. There they were ready to listen to suggestions for improving the work. Even if the suggestions weren't practical, they showed that the boys were thinking, progressive.

When my friend the philanthropist told me about the place he had found for me down here in Thompsonville he warned me that things would seem dull and slow, at first. "But you'll

find the tone of the place sweet, pure, wholesome." That was the way it looked to me at first, and I was afraid I might corrupt the town, with my penitentiary-made ideas. But now I'm not so sure that the moral tone of the penitentiary wasn't higher, on the whole. We had lived pretty rough lives, but we knew what wrong is, and were taking our punishment for it. We knew when we were shirking and lying, and generally we were ashamed of it. Some of us expected to take up the old life when we got out, but we were ready to accept the consequences. The young fellows I meet here, around town or under the willows by the fishing pools, have a lot of talk that would surprise you. To listen to it, you'd say there isn't anything they wouldn't do if they could get away without penalties. They have the imagination of horrible crooks; all they lack is the nerve. At the penitentiary we made a big difference between the persons we respected and those we didn't. We could tell an honest man as soon as we laid eyes on him, and whether he liked us or not, we never had anything to say about him he wouldn't have been willing to hear. And as for women, if any of the fellows had dared to say a word against one

we respected, like the superintendent's wife, we'd have knocked his head off. These Thompsonville boys don't respect anybody, least of all women. Maybe you think I've got a grudge against these boys because they don't take to me. But they do take to me. Some one of them is always running in to get me to come out to some party or fishing trip. Mr. Harding doesn't like it; he's actually afraid they will corrupt me. He considers them a terribly bad lot. The Thompsonville young men used to be all right, he says, but after the railway came in, every boy who was good for anything went down to the city to make his fortune. The boys who have stayed here are just leavings, without brains or ambition, and having nobody better than themselves to associate with, they get worse and worse.

There are about twice as many girls as boys in Thompsonville, and they look to me like a different race. They are quiet and sweet and seem rather sad. Mr. Harding says there aren't finer girls anywhere, and I believe him. Of course I don't know them; I feel that they wouldn't want to be acquainted with a man of a record like mine. It might spoil their chances

—though God knows what their chances are here. . . . There is one I know pretty well. I deliver vegetables at her house, and I spend a good deal more time talking to her than is necessary. She is very nice to me; she thinks I would never have got into trouble if I had had a good woman's influence. Maybe so; I certainly don't feel very set up over my past life when I'm talking to her. She is a favorite with Mr. and Mrs. Harding. They have hinted that if I marry and settle down here, I'd get their farm after they die. When it dawned on me they might be driving at something, I got rather scared. Me married and settled down? With my record, I'm not good enough. And besides, after a while I might come to look on Thompsonville as a kind of life-term.

I'm still for prison reform, but it seems to me now that there is more need for reforming the Thompsonvilles. Somebody like Tom Osborne ought to make his home in each of these little old villages, let in the sun and systematize the work, and let loose a few ideas for the young fellows to try their minds on. You can never make very much out of a penitentiary. At best, the boys who come out will be rather a bad lot.

But a place like Thompsonville, where everybody could have all the food and air and sun he needs, could be made into a kind of little Heaven, under its swaying treetops in the bend of the shining river.

VIII

Short Change

SQUARE white tents in twelve double rows on a sparsely wooded hilltop; soldiers in blue uniforms at attention while the bugle sounds the retreat, repeated in an instant from across a little valley where another regiment stands at attention among its white tents, repeated again and again in notes fainter and yet fainter from over the hills on all sides: a military encampment, as you would surmise, of twenty years ago, when nobody knew anything about visibility or sanitation or morale, when arms and the manual and the regimental organization were other than they are now, and nothing the same but human nature.

We had fallen out and were lounging before our tents when a strange soldier from another regiment passed rapidly down the company street.

“There’ll be some fun at the sutler’s shack, just before taps,” he remarked, to no one in par-

ticular. Twenty paces further on he repeated his statement, mechanically, and we heard him repeat it once more as he passed by the mess tent on his way to another company.

"Say, did you hear what that fellow said?" cried the cook, thrusting out his head from between the flaps of the mess tent.

"Oh, shut up!" said the first sergeant. "You fellows have got to stay right here. Mind, I'm watchin' ye. The first fellow that leaves the company street 'll get reported."

"What do you think?" murmured my tent-mate Buck, an eager boy, enlisted under age. "They've been talking of running the sutler out."

"Nothing to it," I asserted. "They wouldn't dare. Anyway, you and I are going to keep out of it."

"Well, all right. But damn the sutler."

"Amen," I agreed. It was two weeks beyond pay day, and not a soul in the company had any money left. The sutler had garnered it all. What could you expect? After two hours' drill on a sweating morning, one had to drink, but not, if he could help it, the tepid water in the company barrel, tasting of vegetable mold and

vinegar soaked wood. At the sutler's were to be had lemonade, passably cool and refreshing even if it was made without lemons, bottled soft drinks and a marvelous beverage known as blackberry bounce which made a total abstainer grotesquely gay. Until the pay ran out the sutler was confronted from morning till night with thirsty and hungry soldiers, sometimes in ranks ten deep. And from morning till night an ugly quarrel was going on over his counter.

"Here, you damn dago, I gave you a dollar. Where's my change?"

"No, no, you gave me fi' cents."

"You're lying. Give me my change or I'll knock your damn head off."

The sutler would shrug his shoulders and serve another row of customers. If the trouble maker was very persistent, the sutler would shell out change with a poisonous gesture. He was an Armenian, and no doubt had learned in the trade with the Kurds how far one may defy, how far one must compromise with violence. Current report was that the sutler made a regular practice of short change, but there was a strong minority opinion that this report was eight-tenths pure fabrication and one-tenth

founded on mistake. Several men in my company boasted of their success in getting drinks for nothing and bullying the sutler out of change besides. Probably someone else suffered for it. Anyway, the sutler was bound to win out in the end; if his customers occasionally cheated him, he nevertheless got the money back in trade. Inevitably he was cordially detested.

The sutler's shack stood in a clearing about equidistant from the four regimental camps on which he preyed. It was a long, half-gable shed, solidly backed with oak planks set vertically and equipped with iron braced shutters to let down over the counter at night. In a tree before the shack the sutler kept a gasoline torch flaring all night, and he was so apprehensive that one could hardly step within the flickering circle of its light without the sutler appearing in the doorway, his right hand behind his back.

The dusk was growing heavy. I was preparing to turn in, when Buck, who had been making a call on a neighboring company, thrust his head into the tent.

"Say," he whispered. "There aren't ten men in D company's tents. Our boys are all gone, too. Let's get out before the officers catch on."

"They're all crazy," I grumbled. "They'll drill us to death to-morrow, for this."

"Come on!" cried Buck, tugging at my belt.

I blew out my light and stepped out of the tent. Men from other companies were stealthily slipping through between the tents, headed for the sutler's. I caught some of Buck's eagerness and in a moment we too were slipping between tents in the darkness. Beyond the camp we issued upon a trail, now quite packed with dark figures.

"Hullo," sounded a strange voice in my ear. "Did he short change you?"

"No," I replied. "I never trusted him to make change."

"You were smart. I don't know another man he hasn't skinned,—You're Peters, M company, aren't you?"

"No. C company.

"Oh, I mistook you. Gosh! Hear 'em?"

I caught a confused wave of sound, shouting interspersed with shrill whistles. We began to run.

In the clearing, under the flickering gasoline torch, hundreds of men were packed about the front of the sutler's shack. The Armenian stood

in his doorway, pale but imperturbable, his eyes glaring fiercely, his thick lips curving in a nervous smile. The crowd was keeping its distance, as word had passed back from the front that the sutler had his finger on the trigger of a six-shooter. We were after fun, not shooting, and it was enough to hurl imprecations at him. When Buck and I arrived, the spirit of the crowd was good humored, for the most part, but occasionally one could perceive a note of real hatred. What seemed like a deliberate competition in imprecations got in motion, and the more violent curses gained rapidly over the milder ones. The character of the voices, too, began to change: the original miscellaneous clamor split into two well defined currents of deep notes and high that would occasionally reinforce each other and make one thrill unaccountably. The crowd was pressing closer. The Armenian still kept his nerve, but the movements of his head were becoming spasmodic. It was still fun with us, but the idea that it was serious was visibly gaining on the Armenian.

“Poor devil,” I thought, “this has been carried about far enough.” And then a new baying note rose from the mob, a note I had not sup-

posed to be within the range of the human voice. I shivered, and as I glanced again at the Armenian, darting his eyes from one quarter to another in suppressed panic, I felt my pity slip from me. I began to exult, like a hunter who has found a wild animal in a trap, to finish at leisure. "Kill the damn thief! Kill the damn dago!" the crowd was yelling. It thrilled!

There was a lull: something was going on that we in the center could only divine. Above the mutterings, subdued for the moment, we heard a sound like the splitting of a timber. Word passed from the flanks of the crowd, "They've pried out a plank behind." The Armenian turned to look back into his shack; his jaw dropped; his thin acquisitive profile quivered; the white of his eye seemed to glaze. A sharp pebble hurled from behind him struck him just below the cheekbone: it clung for a second, like a hideous black growth, then dropped, thrust out by a jet of blood. A mantle of frenzy fell upon the mob. An atrocious roar arose, carrying on its waves all the obscenities and blasphemies known to young America.

"Kill the damn Jew! Kill the God damn Nigger!"

The mob surged forward: all around me men wedged between converging lines of force were crying out that they were being crushed. The Armenian darted into his shack, snapping the door to in the face of a dozen men springing for him. They beat and pushed at the door while a hundred others thrust their weight against the counter shutters. The shack was rocking on its foundations; another thrust, and over she'd go. Suddenly I became conscious of a weakening of the pressure from behind me; of a subsidence of the volume of yells, of a subtle change in the quality of the sound. Did I merely imagine that I had heard a sharp "Halt!" at my left? I stood on tiptoe, to look over the heads of the men about me. Through an opening produced by an accidental grouping of shorter men, I caught a glimpse of a long line of men in khaki, springing from the darkness to the rear, passing across the lighted circle, and into the darkness beyond, within which by straining one seemed to distinguish the dull gleam of rifle barrels and belt buckles, extending interminably.

"Fix bayonets!" sounded the command, distinctly.

“The regulars!” murmured voices all around me. In an instant we were rushing across the lighted space, in a panic as infectious and as blind and overpowering as our rage of a moment past. Everywhere the woods resounded with the steps of running men. I lost Buck, and ran wildly, without sense of direction, until my breath was gone. Over the comb of a little hill I paused to gather my wits, only to be run down by a group of men who had clung together in their abject panic. I picked myself up, bruised and still more dazed, and began to run away at right angles to my previous course. I burst into a little clearing and stopped short: before me in the darkness was something upright; a sentry? It remained perfectly immobile. Cautiously I approached: it was a granite slab, one of the many erected to commemorate a battle of the Civil War fought on this terrain. I seated myself with my back to the stone, for protection against any galloping figures that might chance my way. Through my shirt, clinging with perspiration, I could feel the cold, sharp cut characters of the inscription: the names of Americans of my father’s generation who had fallen here in defense of a race of alien blood. Had

that atrocious, non-human cry of race hatred and blood thirst, sharply cut into my memory like these letters on granite, actually issued from my own lips? Or had I just heard it and made it my own, in the moment of the collective frenzy and the fused emotions and will of the mob?

IX

Phyllis the Feminist

OF theories she has enough to bow down a far sturdier frame. So 'it is no wonder she stands slightly stooped, or walks with rather uncertain, if swift and eager steps. Nor is it a wonder that there are furrows forming in her brow, broad and white under masses and masses of black hair, disposed with a sole view to utility but rebelliously attaining beauty nevertheless. Her eyes are often weary, too. Gray eyes were made to betray the weariness one had intended to conceal. And now I've got so far with her portrait, let me add a nose just a trifle too incurved and a millimeter too short, and lips too full to accord perfectly with the canons of white stone, mobile lips always curving in smiles or quivering with sympathy. Not a beautiful woman, you say. No, not unless you know her. One who knows not the real Phyllis, as only those who wait can know, finds far more beauty in her sister Clio, faultlessly composed of coun-

tenance, with not a feature sinning against any high canon. Perfect bows of love are Clio's lips, and how can you, O stranger, know what a tongue they sheathe? It, too, might have the beauty of quick darting flame between white teeth, if you were deaf. But you hear, and so you know it as a barbed dart for your breast, a cat o' nine tails for your back. If there is any homogeneity in human blood, Clio is surely a changeling. She no more resembles Phyllis than the serpent in an Indian cave resembles the jewel it guards. For years now I've been braving the serpent, and her hiss grows no less terrifying. But the jewel grows constantly more precious.

When Clio's lightnings are unloosed upon the male sex, and specifically upon you, in consternation you behold yourself a mere shred of water-logged wreckage tossing upon a sea of fathomless iniquity. All the crimes of male man are dragged before the bar of judgment out of your shrinking being. You are the primordial brute and bully from whom the shrieking children and trembling women used to flee to the dark recesses in the cave where you were lord, ages and ages ago. You are Bluebeard himself,

tiring of wives and slaying them; you are the abominable trafficker in white slaves. Or if you are not, this is only by the grace of God and the terrors of the criminal law. Phyllis knows as well the catalogue of masculine misdoings. She is equally alive to the disabilities still resting upon woman by virtue of man-made laws, man-invented customs. She too is sworn enemy of man, as an institution. But for man in the concrete, aspiring or cynical, crank or dilettante, brute or dandy, the charity of Phyllis is unstinted. He is what he is through circumstance; and all things considered, says Phyllis, it is remarkable how much there is in him still worth salvaging.

What the world needs, according to Phyllis, is not the extirpation of man, but the elevation of woman from her sad state of dependence, material and moral. And since the key to modern life is economics—so many professors have said this that it must be true—Phyllis is vowed to a crusade for the economic independence of woman. She would dearly love to conduct a far-flung lecture campaign, but before even the smallest audience she falters and all but faints. So she has chosen what she considers the hum-

bler lot of mere work. She has organized a trade school where the daughters of the poor—and the daughters of the rich, if they like—may gain industrial proficiency and economic independence, and with these that sense of personal freedom and individual responsibility that are supposed to characterize industrial man. It is a good school, too, and it thrives. This is admitted even by me who have watched it through ten years in the pose of a scoffer, and indeed hoping in my secret heart that it would fall through.

Phyllis is an incomparable administrator; there is not one of the problems infesting the volunteer educator's life for which she does not find a satisfactory solution. But she is entirely unconscious of her competence. And she is forever surrounding herself with advisers, prevaillingly men of imposing bulk and dreadnaught mien, professors, responsible journalists, public-spirited citizens. Ask yourself, how much thought have these formidable fronts ever given to the problem of industrially educating pink, chattering little city misses, hovering in the limbo between the public schools and matrimony? No thought at all, and the canny ones

among them pluck their beards and bide their time until Phyllis has set forth the problem and her solution of it. Then they restate her solution in polysyllabic terms that Phyllis must labor painfully to comprehend. She always does comprehend, and a celestial smile sweeps the perplexity from her face. "Oh Mr. Vished, you have helped me so much! Now I can see just where I have been making my mistakes."

Poor child, she really thinks they have given her something. Those of her advisers who aren't canny emit clouds of advice, each cloudlet sufficient in itself to wreck her undertaking. From these, too, she says she gets great help, and believes it. If all those busy men had not been so generous with their counsel, what in the world would have become of her school, she demands passionately whenever I venture a word of truth about those hollow drums. Why is it that a woman should be so bent on thrusting the credit for what she alone has done upon other persons, utterly undeserving? Why, even I, who openly avow my mortal hostility to the great work, am regularly enumerated among its saviors.

Well, thanks to the advisers, as Phyllis main-

tains, or in spite of them, as I maintain, the school is a great success, and if you are a feminist from Sweden or Montenegro or Los Angeles, you visit it as a matter of course when you are in New York. Here, as you can see for yourself, girls are gaining a command of the industrial system so that the factory will be an instrument pliable to their hands, not a mill inexorably to crush out their lives. Here they are learning how art can shoot from the industrial stem, otherwise so dry and dead, and how joy may conclude peace with labor. Even I, ingrained scoffer, grow dithyrambic as a sociologist from Helsingfors as I survey this feminist Eden of hopeful striving. How can it be that Phyllis sighs and her kind eyes look so weary?

See this demure little maid with shiny wax curls drawn over her pink ears, listening with clear, steady eyes while Phyllis explains with infinite patience some complicated and fascinating process? Why does the maiden reply so absently, so ineptly? What is she thinking of, behind her expression of serene attention? A "date." Don't think I'm divining this: I am a man and take our little maid at her face value, something by no means negligible. Phyllis told

me. And this, too, she told me, though not in these bald terms: Taken by and large, there are no items in the instruction of the school one-tenth so interesting to its pupils, or valued one-tenth so high, as the formulas for "dates" smuggled into the school in hastily scrawled notes, or transmitted by a few hurried words at a street-corner.

Let me not give the impression that Phyllis is in revolt against the fated renewal of the generations. That would be to confuse her way of thought with that of Clio, who looks upon human nature as something obnoxious, immoral, man-made. No, Phyllis expects her girls to fall in love, and to wed, unless, in the rare instance, they have a vocation for life-long independence. But love should be disinterested, heroic. Now what are the qualities in their lovers these little daughters of Eve most celebrate? "He's got a dad who's awfully rich." "He's got just a fine job, and after we're married I'll never have to do a bit of work in all my life." Can it be, asks Phyllis, that economic independence for woman is just a leisure-class dream, vain, like other leisure-class dreams? This sounds more like one of my ideas than like Phyllis's, does it not?

Well, between you and me, I planted it, long ago. Phyllis doesn't remember, nor do I remind her. But the idea grows.

Phyllis has her despairs: it is none the less a great work she is accomplishing. Yet Phyllis is so human and there are so many others who are not. Therefore I maintain, it is a great waste that she should be immolated even to such a noble ideal. "Well," you demand tartly, "why don't you tell her so?" O perspicuous one, I have, again and again, for ten years, almost. It was at first a mobile campaign, with short, sharp conflicts in which I was always routed. But years ago I settled down to a war of attrition. And now a great change is coming over Phyllis's affairs. Clio is to be married. She has yielded her heart to a millionaire, blameless, bloodless scion of a fierce old rum-drinking, slave-dealing New England house. Thus are the sins of the fathers visited upon the sons even unto the third generation, and nowadays still farther down the line. But I reckon not of the millionaire: Phyllis will be lonely.

X

The Molting of Alcibiades

“**N**O, nothing at all serious just Dame Nature. She’s leaving you, confound her, but you’re not the first she’s forsaken.” The doctor threw back his head and laughed. Horrible beast, thought Alcibiades. A man of any fineness of nature couldn’t have had teeth set at such wide intervals. Wideness was the character of this doctor: eyes, big, cold, bulging, with what seemed half an ell between them; shoulders inhumanly far apart; wide hands, wide thumbs. Surely the doctor couldn’t have been like that when he was a young man: he must just have spread, under the weight of his own coarse brutality.

“Thank you, doctor. I’m much reassured.” Alcibiades rose.

“Don’t go.” The doctor rolled his eyes and seemed almost to smack his lips. “Now we’re on the subject of advancing age, I just want to show you what nature does to our poor bodies, anyway. Come into my museum.”

"I mustn't take any more of your time," protested Alcibiades.

Anybody else would have perceived that Alcibiades was suffering and would have let him go in peace. But the doctor laid his wide hand on Alcibiades's arm and half thrust him through the office door, down a dim corridor and into a large room overencumbered with glass cases. A faint odor of stale chemicals made Alcibiades's nostrils quiver.

"Lord, what a lot of bones!" Alcibiades shuddered.

"Yes, they are my pet extravagance. I flatter myself I have the best private collection in town. Some day when we have lots of time I want to show you all of it. But we were speaking of advancing age. We'll just look at what I have in Case L." The doctor pushed back the glass doors of the case and took down the upper half of a skull, neatly sawed as if to make a heathen drinking cup.

"You see how thin it is at the temples?" The doctor tapped the bone with his pencil, producing a distressing, papery sound. "You ask me, what became of the bony tissue. Here is the answer." The doctor drew from a lower shelf

the bones of an arm and forearm, soldered, as it were, into one piece by a rough bony deposit encasing the elbow.

"Lord!" exclaimed Alcibiades in horror. "How could he use his arm?"

"He couldn't. Rheumatism he called it and the C. O. S. thought he was just malingering. But here is something still more interesting. See how the bony tissue of the head of this thigh bone is worn away? Feel it: smooth as glass, isn't it? What does this mean? Why, it means, while he was still walking, the cartilage was entirely worn away, and much bone besides."

"Must have squeaked," said Alcibiades feebly. "Awfully interesting, Doctor, but I'm afraid I'm missing an appointment. Good-by."

"Going down?" inquired the doctor.

"No. I'm going up to the Grand Central."

"Good, so am I." Alcibiades shuddered again. But there was no help for it.

"It isn't merely a man's body that changes when he reaches your stage in life," lectured the doctor, as Alcibiades vainly strove to walk him out of breath. "Your eyes change from near-sightedness to far-sightedness; your waist line grows heavier, your breath short. But these

are little things. The big thing is the change in mind. You're going to grow conservative, but for a few months you'll find yourself inclined to be a wild radical. You're going to grow complacent, but for a while you'll have fits of deep pessimism. You're going to become materialistic, but now you have vain, spiritualistic, mystic yearnings. Most of the time you feel droopy, downhearted. For all the world like a bird molting, isn't it?" The doctor's laughter rose above the din of the streets like the sound of a gunmetal gong.

"And as for your attitude toward the fair sex——"

"Oh, come, Doctor, don't talk nonsense. You're going to threaten me with approaching indifference."

"No, not that at all. I don't know myself just when that sets in. But you'll undergo a change nevertheless in that regard. You'll begin to be mysteriously attracted to extreme youth. You, an intellectual man, will begin to find yourself dull in the presence of a mature woman. But a silly little miss of eighteen, chewing gum, talking slang, saucy eyes, pink cheeks and all that—she'll make your blood dance."

"Pooh, you're all off there," said Alcibiades contemptuously.

"I don't say you've reached that point yet, but you'll soon reach it. Hang it all! I should have been a psychologist. That's what really interests me.—I thought you said you were going to the Grand Central? No? Well, good-by."

"What a brute! Who recommended him to me, anyway?" thought Alcibiades, heading for Fifth Avenue. He knew that his day had been spoiled. He was rid of the doctor's physical presence, to be sure, but it was not so easy to emerge from the aura of his detestable personality. Something of the doctor seemed to pervade the whole atmosphere, dimming the sunlight on the shop fronts, subtracting a shade or two of blue from the sky overhead. It was warm, but Alcibiades felt chilly.

"Hot Scotch might help, but of course I can't get it at this season." Alcibiades turned into his club. The library was deserted except for a bald, petulant faced member who sat at a window mechanically turning the leaves of a magazine.

"I know what ails him," said Alcibiades to

himself. "Nature is dissolving the bone away from where it belongs and depositing it where it doesn't belong. Soon he'll squeak when he moves." Alcibiades flexed his arm. What! Did he perceive a slight twinge, a scarcely perceptible stiffness? Alcibiades seated himself in the far corner of the library, turning his face to the wall.

Of course he hadn't actually been christened Alcibiades. His official signature was Luther Baldwin, Jr. But at college he had run with a very wild and dashing set of gilded youth, and had played politics in the utterly shameless manner of the classical ancients. Besides, he had cultivated the friendship of a very original dis-frocked professor who conducted a tavern, abhorred of the faculty, just off the college campus. Somebody in spite had dubbed him the young Alcibiades, and the name stuck. He liked it, and did his best to live the part. While the rest of his set were squaring themselves with the existing order of serious business, the young Alcibiades was playing at art, dabbling in philosophy, mixing in politics and greatly admiring his own many-sidedness. He was really worth admiring, too. Wherever you saw his handsome

head shining out from the midst of a group of his fellows you were sure to find him talking and the rest listening. He was always to be found in any new movement to oust the constituted authorities from their places, and he always appeared as the leader, so long as the hope remained forlorn. His own circle was very respectable, rather aristocratic; yet somehow they forgave him for consorting with anarchists and longshoremen, waiters and tramps. And the outcasts forgave him his blue-blooded antecedents and relations. So brilliant a creature could not be expected to conform to the social rules imposed upon the ordinary man.

Nobody doubted at first that the young Alcibiades would finally achieve something remarkable. He was preeminently a coming man. He might squander his present, but he had a future. Envious old friends did indeed abandon this opinion as year after year slipped by without tangible realization of the promise of Alcibiades. But there were always new friends to believe in him. And Alcibiades himself had never lost faith in his future. Or more precisely, he had never lost faith until he had fallen into the clutches of Dr. Bradshaw.

In late weeks the young Alcibiades had been occasionally oppressed by a vague malaise, by momentary fits of faintness and dizziness, by sudden blurrings of vision. "It's nothing," he said to his friends. "You'd expect such a life as mine to produce physical consequences. I suppose it's my heart."

At last he yielded to his friends' entreaties and submitted himself to Dr. Bradshaw to be overhauled. Well, it wasn't his heart. It was essentially nothing but a change in his eyes, as the doctor promptly discovered.

"Yes, you're getting far-sighted. Quite naturally. You see, your youth is done. You've been going up hill, now you're going down. You'll soon get adjusted to the new process, and not notice it at all, just as you were formerly adjusted to the process of growth."

"I was afraid it might be my heart," said Alcibiades bravely. One can get along, you know, with almost any kind of heart, if it hangs together at all. But going downhill? The process of aging succeeding upon that of growth while one still looks upon himself as essentially a coming man? Everybody, I suppose, experiences a twinge or two when he first acknowl-

edges that he has passed his meridian. But Alcibiades had staked everything upon his upward trend. He had no standing grain, only new sowings, and the autumn frosts were in the air.

Gradually the library filled with men who had drifted in to drink tea or better; men of middle age or older, for the most part corpulent and contented.

"That's a banker," commented Alcibiades. "That's the head of a construction company. That's a college president. They're going downhill, too, but they don't know it. Why? I see. The bank, the construction company, the college keep growing and their presidents confuse the process with their personal growth.

"That's the secret. Have some kind of work that will serve you as a sort of carapace which will stand up before you in the glass, stiff and formidable, even if you quite shrivel away inside. Oh, thunder. I'll go down and see if Robert is in his office."

Robert Baldwin, Alcibiades's elder brother, maintained a law office downtown. Law bored Alcibiades, and so did Robert. In fact, the law had eaten out Robert's personality as an oyster

crab eats out an oyster. But since he had begun to feel out of sorts, Alcibiades had haunted his brother's office. It was the call of the blood in distress, perhaps, he had explained to himself.

As was usually the case near the close of business hours, Robert was not to be seen. And, as usual, Alcibiades seated himself to wait vainly a half hour or more. It was a martyrdom. Three typewriters were clattering away desperately as if it made the least difference when legal documents are finished. At the desk nearest Alcibiades a very young girl was struggling with her shorthand notes. She'd never be efficient, but she'd always be cheap, and Robert doted on cheapness. Beyond that, she was beautiful, but what was that to Robert, desiccated by the law? She was the daughter of Sardinian immigrants, over-Americanized by the public schools and the business college.

Thank Heaven, Americanization doesn't work such havoc with looks as with manners. Grazia's hair, in spite of her efforts to pull it over her ears, retained its character of rebellious, living tresses of jet. Grazia's brows preserved their air of mystical brooding, whatever trivial East Side scheming might be taking place behind them.

Grazia's eyes, blacker than their entrancing lashes, seemed to burn with meaning. Of course the meaning wasn't there, but what did that matter? If you glanced at Grazia and then closed your eyes her face stood out in the darkness of your imagination as does the face of an Italian Madonna in the dark canvas of an old master. Only, the lips on the canvas of your imagination would suddenly curve in a challenging, dazzling smile, and the olive cheeks would glow with dusky red. Alcibiades glanced at Grazia and the feeling of tedium and melancholy dropped from him.

Grazia rose from her desk and approached him, as if to consult him about the rendering of certain puzzling notes.

"Say," she said in a low, discordant voice. "Can't we make it a little later? I've got an awful lot of letters to get off, and I'm 'fraid I can't be there at six."

The doctor's brutal voice seemed to ring in Alcibiades's ear. "A silly little miss of eighteen——" His feeling of exhilaration was gone.

"See here, Grazia," he said, rising. "Let's cut all this out. There's nothing in it for you, and nothing in it for me."

"What you throwing me down for?" demanded Grazia indignantly. "Just because I can't be there at six. Oh, well!" She tossed her head melodramatically and retired to her desk.

"I'm a fool. She was good fun. That old brute of a doctor is right. I'm molting," reflected Alcibiades as he signaled a taxi.

"Oh, drive me anywhere," he replied to the chauffeur's unspoken inquiry. "Drive me through the park if you can't think of anything better."

Long shadows from the west lay across the park. They were brownish, dingy, dead. Only yesterday the shadows fell from the east, black and clear cut, and between them lay strips of bright green glistening with dew.

XI

The Meed of a Brute

ANTELOPE CREEK, under the red-painted iron bridge at the station, looks like an abandoned Eastern canal, good for nothing but green scum and pond lilies. But at the time of the June rains, when the overfed Missouri groans in its bed, Antelope Creek becomes a river of black water, flush with its banks and flowing, apparently, uphill toward the bluffs, where alone you can set foot on solid ground in this muddy season. To get there you embark in a flat-bottomed boat, which will nose its own way among the drowned willows while you sit at ease, surveying comfortable farm-houses nestling among barns and full corncribs and haystacks—a plethora carried over from the last year's harvest. These are the homes of the enthusiasts who rushed west to defend the right in "bleeding Kansas." There is no enthusiasm now, only prosperity, waiting for the roads to harden so that the Ford cars may come out and earn their

keep. Soon the banks of the stream become higher and you see nothing but the dense fringe of ragweed on its edges, a little above you. At length your boat begins to turn in circles; you have reached the head of navigation. The real Antelope Creek is before you, a thin stream, trickling down in many strands over a shelf of greasy clay. You may disembark, for the mud is never deep on the upland.

The road rises abruptly for a hundred yards, and then keeps a fairly consistent level, following the sinuosities of a long hill just above the margin of profitable cultivation. Below you lies the Antelope valley, broad enough for a succession of good farms that pretend to match the bottom land in fertility, at least on their choicest acres near the stream. These are the homesteads of Civil War veterans, contented old men enjoying a twofold prosperity from the rising price of corn and meat and the increasing liberality of pension legislation. Gradually the valley grows narrower and the cornfields tilt toward the sky-line. Germans live here and other immigrant homesteaders, thriftily trading their lives for minute improvements in the thin soil. At last the road finds the valley no longer worth

following; it turns resolutely to the left and mounts a saddleback hill, from which the wayfarer gains a profitless vista of hill above hill, to the faint horizon. These are the estates of the men yet to come. In the autumn fire sweeps over the slopes, offering a few hours of splendor and smoke in recompense for the blackness that is to reign until May—save when the snow flies. In summer thin blades of grass clothe the hills scantily, and the compass plant puts forth its pronged leaves, pointing futilely to the true north.

Just before you leave the valley you observe at the bank of the dwindling stream a little hut almost weathered into the landscape. The walls are of prairie sod, with an unsymmetrical opening for a door and another for a window; the poles supporting the sod roof protrude and slant upward as if giving way in the middle. This was the home of Rasmus Keiser and his faithful wife Trina, the last ripple of immigration into the Antelope valley. Trina was one of those woman you don't really see if you deliberately look at them, which you feel you have no right to do. Effaced, weathered, protectively colored, I'm not sure which, she

was very thin and frail, and breathed her words instead of voicing them. I think her eyes were blue and her hair yellow under gray.

Rasmus you couldn't help seeing. He was enormous, with offensively prominent milk-blue eyes, and a disorderly beard, garishly red but trimmed at the temples with white. There was no remark so unimportant but he would put the full force of his cavernous lungs behind it. He was a brute and a bully, and prided himself that through all his life he had whipped every boy or man who had dared to show fight. Every Saturday he walked four miles to town to spend the night in the saloon, where he held an arm-chair as his fort, drinking hugely and glaring about for a possible enemy. Sometimes when the room was full of rowdies and one appeared to be egging another on, Rasmus would rise and reel heavily about the room, by way of temptation. A newcomer, encouraged by thought of easy victory, would jolt against him and lively moments would follow. If his victim succumbed too easily, Rasmus was likely to make out a charge of conspiracy against the whole crowd. Some would make good their exit, but for the

rest Rasmus would "cord them up," to use his own woodman's phrase.

With the rising of the sun Rasmus would stow a pint bottle in his pocket and set out with long strides for home. Not a sign would be in his gait of the raw alcohol in his veins. But once he reached the point in the road above his house he would put his hands to his mouth and roar: "*Trina! Jeg er fuld!*" Then he would lie down in the middle of the road.

Trina would run panting up the slope, and after supreme efforts would get him on his feet. Then followed a slow progress down the path, Rasmus swaying from side to side like a top-heavy ship, Trina exerting all her strength and agility and practised art to prevent an overturn. Sometimes she failed, and both went down heavily among the sandburs, Rasmus roaring reproaches and Trina breathing apologies. Occasionally a passing neighbor volunteered assistance. I did so once. But I got a glance from Rasmus, and remembering the "cording-up" process, desisted.

Rasmus was a public scandal, and we discussed him thoroughly whenever we met. "It's a pity somebody doesn't kill him," was our usual con-

clusion. And that is just what in the end somebody did. Rasmus attacked one newcomer too many and got pistol bullets in exchange for blows. The rowdies carried him home. And Trina went mad. We tried to get her away from the wretched hut, but she wouldn't leave it. All summer she sat in her doorway moaning, or on the prickly turf of the hill above, where Rasmus had been buried.

It was my privilege one September morning to convey Mrs. Barton, the president of the Williams County Equal Suffrage League, over the Antelope Creek road to an upland village meeting. As the event was still fresh, I narrated the tale of Rasmus and Trina.

"I want to see her," said Mrs. Barton.

"There she is now," I said, pointing to a motionless seated figure at the point of the hill.

As we approached Trina looked up vacantly, as though we were part of the procession of cloud shadows pursuing one another over the face of the field. Mrs. Barton offered her hand, but Trina made a deprecating gesture. Her hands were yellow with the soil.

"It is too cold for you here on this hill," said Mrs. Barton.

“For me? No,” breathed Trina. “It is too cold for Rasmus. This is a dreadful country, so black, so cold. It is dreadful to live in, but to die in, it is terrible. Over there it is not hard to die. The ground is full of them, since old time—young men and girls, parents and little children, noble ladies, princes, kings. They have gone the road, and it is not so lonely.”

Trina’s consciousness no longer included us. She had returned to her work of crushing the little hard clods to a fine powder.

“That is the way women used to be,” I said apologetically as we descended the hill.

“Used to be!” exclaimed Mrs. Barton indignantly. “They are now and always will be.”

“But I told you he was a brute and beat her.”

“You men of to-day don’t beat your wives, it is true,” said Mrs. Barton. “A woman has to matter a lot to a man before he will beat her.”

XII

On Land and Sea

THE express was pulling out of the station. I had run through the headlines of the *Evening Post*, and had decided that the text promised nothing worth poring over in the dim light of the smoking car. And so I fell to studying the shoulders and heads of the two young men in the next seat. One was in uniform with sleeve adorned with jolly red chevrons and a wreath and an eagle in white. His well-shaped head, close clipped, crowned with handsome cap, turned incessantly in little quick movements of general awareness and curiosity. The other young man sat quite motionless, rather slouched and inanimate, but there was something about the contour of his hat and the fit of his coat collar that suggested a consciousness of personal superiority.

As the conductor took up the tickets the sailor spoke.

"I see you get out at Baintree. Live there?"

"Yes."

"So do I. That is, I did before I went into the navy."

The civilian remained silent.

"Are you in business at Baintree?" persisted the sailor.

"No. I'm attending college."

"In the city?"

"No, up state. I'm a junior at Cornell. I'll graduate next year, if the draft doesn't take me."

"What do they study there?"

"Oh, it all depends on your course. I am studying mostly economics."

"What is that?"

"Well, it's about the tariff, and prices and such things."

"Oh. Do you like it there?"

"Yes."

"Do you have any fun?"

"I should say we do. You see, we have to attend classes in the morning most of the time, but in the afternoon we can study or do anything we like—work in the gym or play hockey or go on the toboggan slide. Say! that's some fun! And in the spring we do a lot of canoeing

on the lake. Fine lake, but pretty dangerous. Every spring some students get drowned there. One year there were six—some of the bodies weren't recovered for weeks. You wouldn't think that lake was so dangerous."

"Oh," said the sailor respectfully.

"How long have you been in the navy?"

"Six years."

"Like it?"

"I liked it at first, when I had a regular ship. I don't care for it now. It's what you might call a dog's life. You're put on a ship, say for Archangel. When you get there you report to the American consul and he gives you passage on a ship bound for Bristol or Brest. Maybe she doesn't sail for two or three weeks, and all you can do is hang around. Archangel—that's a rotten town for you! Well, when you get down to England or France you look up another American consul, and he puts you on a ship bound for home, and when you get here you find orders to go out on a ship bound for Italy. I got in this morning. As like as not I'll get orders to sail to-morrow."

The collegian eyed the sailor with awakening curiosity.

“What do you do? What kind of work do they give you?”

“I don’t do any work,” said the sailor. “I just command the gun crew.”

“Did you ever get any submarines?”

“No. But they damn near got me. First, when we were coming home on the H—. I was below, and Lord, we got a bump: the ship just stood still and shook. I ran up to the bridge, but she wasn’t even listing. There was a hole in her side seventeen feet across, about all of it above water line. We sent out an S.O.S. and decided to stay by the ship, but the civilians just went wild. They were Spaniards, most of them. A dozen of them got away in a boat and capsized—all drowned. Pretty soon another ship came along and we got off all right. One man went crazy; locked himself in his room so we had to break in with an ax. He fought us off with a stool but finally we got him under control.”

“Gee! What did he think?”

“Lord knows. But the other time it was a close shave. It was just getting daylight. I was on the bridge, talking to the mate, and I saw the torpedo coming. It was mighty rough, and you’d have said that torpedo would jump

right out of the water. I thought she'd miss us, but she didn't. Now you know we had signals; at that time six whistles meant 'Submarine in sight,' and four whistles meant 'All hands leave ship.' When the torpedo struck it keeled me over and I was so rattled I didn't know what I was doing. I gave four whistles and then three and then another three and then four. And the mate said, 'I guess that'll do; nobody knows what in hell your signals mean, but they'll know pretty damn soon.' I ran down to the captain's cabin to wake him up. He was sitting on the edge of his berth stretching. 'Better get dressed, Cap'n,' I said. 'Heigh-ho' he said and stretched some more. 'Guess I better.' 'They got us this time, Cap'n.' 'Heigh-ho. So they did.'

"Then I ran down to my berth to get my life preserver and my automatic. You know the petty officers are supposed to carry pistols and I didn't want to lose it. But I couldn't get the door open. Everything in the whole ship was jammed by the explosion. And while I was pulling at the door the lights went out and I thought, I'd better get to hell out of this. So I ran up to the bridge, and passed the captain, who was still stretching, he was that sleepy, and

I said, 'Cap'n, we'd better get off,' and he said, 'You better go, I won't yet awhile.' I found they had a boat swinging clear with thirteen men in it and I jumped in and the mate ordered them to pay out the ropes.

"The ship was listing fast to the other side, and we dropped down in a hurry and as we went down we hit the head of a poor devil caught in his room and trying to get out by a port hole. Busted it right off. When we'd got about to the water the painter stuck and the ship's list was lifting us. 'Bust it with the ax,' said the mate, and I hit the painter and busted her off and we dropped into the water and nearly capsized. Now, the cook had overslept himself, and was coming down the painter hand over hand, and when I busted it off he let go and dropped right down on us—broke a piece off the edge of the boat. We thought we were going over that time, but she righted herself and we fished the cook out of the water.

"'We'll shove off,' said the mate. 'Nobody else is coming down this side: you can damn near see her keel.' So we pulled away from her and when we were about two hundred yards out, down she went. The mate pulled out his

watch. 'Four minutes and eight seconds,' he said. About noon a French ship came along and picked us up."

"How many were lost?" asked the student.

"Sixty-eight. There was another boat got off, but she capsized. The water was mighty rough, you see."

The student looked out of the window, visibly overcome by a sense of the incomprehensible. The sailor's head resumed its quick movements of awareness and curiosity.

"Say," he said, "in that school where you go, are there any girls?"

"Oh yes," said the student languidly. "There are some. But most of the fellows don't have anything to do with them."

"Why not?" demanded the sailor, turning his handsome, astonished face full upon the student.

"Well, you see, it isn't exactly the best form," said the student gropingly.

"Not the best form?" repeated the sailor, a veil of bewilderment rapidly shading into disgust shrouding his eyes. "Oh!"

The student again turned to the window, in ostensible indifference, but soon his cheek began

to flush as the realization of the sailor's contempt penetrated his consciousness. At the first stop, where the passengers thinned out, the student betook himself to another seat.

XIII

The Lynching in Bass County

BASS COUNTY is mostly rough land. At one corner it dips down into the river bottom, and here you see a few good farms, owned by the merchants and doctors and lawyers of Coxville and worked by Bohemian tenants. Coxville is the county seat and the only railway station in the county. It is just at the edge of the bottom, where a half dozen narrow valleys spread out like fingers into the upland. Motor parties from way across the state sometimes come chugging up the winding valley roads. The scenery is fine, the ladies say: we're lucky to live in so lovely a spot. But scenery is mighty hard to work. It doesn't even make good pasture, and we've got to live somehow.

Coxville, the tourists say, is one of the prettiest towns in the state. It is certainly pretty, with its shady streets on the flat and big brick houses planted on the spurs of the hills above. But Coxville is a den of thieves. There are five

general stores all working in cahoots. Every one of them has two sets of scales, one weighing small for your butter and chickens, the other weighing big for the merchant's sugar and coffee and dried fruit. After they've skinned you on the weight, they skin you on the price. They've divided us farmers up among them. My trade, for instance, belongs to Miller's store. If I get mad and go to another store, I get even worse treatment than Miller was giving me. That's what they call a gentleman's agreement in Coxville. There are three stock buyers—mighty good friends they are, though they make a great noise about competition. They pay the same prices, about a dollar a hundred too low, if you figure out the Chicago market reports. There is a bank in Coxville, but it doesn't do business with farmers. It lends money at seven per cent to old Peter Hammond, who lets us have it for two per cent a month, and makes us pay a bonus for getting it.

Oh yes, Coxville is a pretty village. They live well down there, and we half starve up on our hill farms. If they have a job of hard work, they hire some of our boys to do it and pay back a little of the money they sweat out of us. They

take our girls for housework and make servants out of them—girls of real American stock, not Bohunks—but we're so poor we have to stand it. And they don't take too good care of them. Every now and then a girl comes crying home and some young blood from Coxville goes off for a tour around the world. More than once I've been at secret meetings at Lon Baker's shack, where we figured on going down and cleaning out the whole nest. But we never did anything.

"We're serfs, that's what we are!" Lon always declared. "They take our crops, they take our work, they take our girls. And we just sit around and jaw."

Lon was a mighty good speaker, and well read. He took the *Appeal to Reason*, and about knew by heart everything that was in it. But nobody took much stock in Lon. When we came away from his secret meeting somebody was sure to say: "Hell of a place, Coxville. They'll even take Lon's crops, Lon's work, *and* Lon's girls." Then everybody would laugh and side with Coxville. You see, Lon never had any crops to speak of, and scarcely ever did a lick of work. And you ought to see Lon's girls! Of

all the skinny, freckle-faced, red-haired, shrieking cross-patches— But poor things, they didn't pick the father they were to take after.

We grumbled and ranted, but that was all, until we got track of what was going on down at the courthouse. The county offices, of course, had always belonged to Coxville. There was a Republican clique and a Democratic clique, and every four or six years, we'd put one clique out and the other in, and precious little good it did. Taxes kept going higher, and we got to wondering what in thunder became of the money. There never was any to repair the bridges, and finally we had to ford the streams when we drove to town. The county was always years behind in its school money, and when we served on juries we were paid in warrants we had to discount with Pete Hammond at sixty cents on the dollar. Lon Baker went all over the county getting information about the taxes collected—he never paid his—and calculated that thousands and thousands of dollars just disappeared. At elections the clique that was out would yell for an investigation, but if they got in they never found anything. Finally we made up an independent party and elected a farmer treasurer,

and got an expert accountant to go over the books.

The expert worked for six weeks and found the retiring treasurer, Dr. Williams, about a thousand dollars short. The doctor shelled out and moved to have his bond released, but we weren't satisfied. The doctor had a good salary, eighteen hundred a year, but Lon did some figuring and just about proved that the doctor spent a lot more than that. After he was elected treasurer, the doctor, who was nearly sixty, had married a young wife. She was a great beauty, and Lord, she knew how to make money fly! She kept her house furnished like a palace and always full of company. I knew something about what was going on there because my sweetheart worked for her. Lucy had to wear a black dress and a foolish little lace cap that made me mad whenever I thought of it. But Lucy adored Mrs. Williams, and Lucy's got a lot of good sense.

Well, we made up our minds that the expert had been bought off, so we got a new one, and Lon stood at his shoulder for a month. There wasn't any whitewashing this time. The doctor's accounts were over forty thousand dollars

short. Of course he demanded a new investigation, but we got him indicted for embezzlement. The superior judge was an old friend of the doctor's and quashed the indictment: we had to start over again. Finally we got him to trial, but somehow they managed to hang the jury. We started a new prosecution, but everything went against us. Our lawyers gave our case away, the judge ruled against us, our witnesses went back on their testimony. It was plain, the doctor still had some of that forty thousand, and we'd never get him till it was all spent. Down in Coxville everybody was talking compromise. If we'd let the doctor off, his friends would pay back ten or fifteen thousand, and the county would be saved the cost of years of litigation.

This was more than we could stand. All over the county the farmers were holding meetings: what they talked of doing to Coxville I wouldn't dare to say. Lon Baker spoke at every meeting: what he said sounded like mighty good sense, too. What was at stake, now, Lon argued, was not just money, but the Law itself, the Law that was there before courts were created and that would remain after the courts had

rotted away. The Law, he said, didn't need the courts: any body of freemen had the right and duty to take the Law into their own hands when the courts had failed. Our court had failed and it was time to act.

One day the word passed around to be at Ashton's mill about a mile above Coxville, at ten o'clock at night. Lucy had been getting suspicious and insisted on my passing the evening at her house, but I managed to get away. There were already fifty or sixty men at the mill when I got there. Lon Baker had a bunch of pine knots for torches: popular justice, he said, had been executed in old days by torch light. Most of the other men carried lanterns.

Nothing had been said about what we were going to do, but there were a lot of guns in the crowd and several men had brought ropes. Lon had a rope and seemed rather put out that there were others. They might arouse suspicion, he said, as if the whole county hadn't been in the secret. We waited until there were about a hundred of us and then struck out over the hill, to get to the doctor's house without passing through the village. We walked fast and talked mighty little. Lon was in his glory, leading a

body of Anglo-Saxon freemen to the defense of the Law. So he put it. But the rest of us felt rather sick of our job. Every man shaded his face as well as he could with his hat; if the light of a lantern flashed on him he seemed to dodge. You see, the doctor was a pleasant old fellow we had all chatted with. The Law had to be vindicated but we'd rather have vindicated it on someone else.

We put out our lights, except Lon's torch, and scattered in groups among the blooming lilacs on the doctor's lawn. My post was near the parlor window. It was wide open and I could see the doctor sitting in an armchair. To see him for the first time, you'd say he was about forty: anyway he was straight and quick, smooth-shaven and hardly gray. He was rather pale this night, and looked tired. Mrs. Williams was at the piano, very fine and aristocratic. She certainly was a beauty! She seemed to be happy; anyway the music she was playing was very sweet and gay. At that moment most of us were for backing out, I believe. But Lon went up to the door and gave it a terrible thump. Mrs. Williams sprang from her music stool: the doctor rose slowly and stepped to the door. As

he opened it everybody got out of the path of white light—everybody but Lon, who waved his sputtering torch.

“Good evening, Lon,” the doctor said quietly. He looked around rather sharply and he must have got glimpses of the men among the lilac bushes. If he was uneasy though, he didn’t show it. “What can I do for you?”

“We represent the Law,” said Lon, making his voice as deep as a drum. “You can bribe the courts, but you can’t beat the Law.”

“Oh dear, what is the matter?” Mrs. Williams appeared beside the doctor in the doorway and clutched his arm anxiously.

“You can’t beat the Law,” said Lon again. “You have stolen the people’s money. You have suborned witnesses and bribed the courts. You thought the Law was dead. But it has raised us up, Anglo-Saxon freemen, to execute its decrees.”

“One moment, gentlemen, and we can arrange our business to your satisfaction. My dear, will you please go inside? This is politics, and we may get a little rough.”

“Yes, get her out of sight,” said Lon. “She was the cause of it all. You stole our money

to make her better than our wives and daughters."

"I won't go," said Mrs. Williams, "I can't understand what this is all about."

"Oh, you can't?" said Lon. "You can't understand that we're sore about the forty thousand you made him steal?"

Mrs. Williams first went white and then red. "I made him steal?" Nobody had ever spoken to her like that in all her life.

"Suppose we leave the women out of this," said the doctor. "It's true. I took the county's money. I'm ready to take the consequences."

"You took the county's money?" Mrs. Williams exclaimed. "But you said it wasn't true. You said it was all politics."

"Yes," said the doctor.

"But why?" Mrs. Williams seemed bewildered. Lon laughed, but the rest of us just felt sorry for her. That kind of a woman never thinks where the money comes from, I suppose.

"Why?" the doctor repeated. "You knew we weren't living on my salary."

"But I thought—I thought you had——"

"You thought he had money," said Lon.

"You married him for his money and he didn't have any. So he had to steal some."

"It isn't true," Mrs. Williams took her hand from the doctor's arm. "You know it isn't true."

"Of course," said the doctor, "but if it were—I'm an old man, my dear, and it's precious little I had to give you."

Mrs. Williams looked down at her white breast with the twinkling necklace, her pink dress and heavy lace. You could see what she was thinking. For all her beauty, she'd been bought, bought with stolen money. She knew that was what we were all thinking. She put up her chin, turned round and walked swiftly back into the house. She seemed to feel so insulted and ashamed that there wasn't any room left in her mind for the doctor's troubles. She was deserting the doctor, and deserting him for good; there wasn't a man of us who couldn't see that. The doctor saw it all right, too. Poor old devil, all his smart youthfulness dropped from him. All at once you noticed how wrinkled, how gray he was. So that's what it means to be old! I'd never realized that before. Maybe my Lucy's arms aren't so white and smooth and

tapering as those I just saw, but they come free, if I do pick a crow's living out of my hill farm. And I'd bet my life, if I were caught stealing, Lucy would stand by me. That's what it means to be young.

"Well, gentlemen," said the doctor wearily, "why don't you go ahead?"

"Yes, why don't we?" cried Lon, waving his torch.

But a huge, husky voiced farmer I didn't know pushed himself in front of Lon.

"Doctor, we're tired of bein' robbed. I don't know as I blame you. I reckon we'd all steal for a woman, leastwise such a pretty one. But it's got to stop. Next man we catch stealing from this county gets the rope."

"*Next* man!" yelled Lon. But it was plain that everybody wanted to compromise on the "next man." We felt the doctor had got about what was coming to him, anyway. Already numbers of men were moving toward the gate or leaping the picket fence.

I got away as quickly as I could, wanting to avoid Lon, who lives above me on the same road. But Lon was walking fast too in his rage, and overtook me half a mile out of town.

“There’s no Law left in this country!” he exclaimed bitterly. “The Law is dead. We’re only serfs. Not a drop of free Anglo-Saxon blood in us.”

There was something in what Lon was saying. The Law was dead, but I wasn’t mourning. Up a hillside to the right there was a light burning. It was late, but Lucy’d like to know everything was all right; no doubt she was worried. So I let Lon get a little ahead of me in the darkness and slipped away on a side path, glad to hear the last of his ranting: “The Law is dead. We’re serfs, plain serfs.”

XIV

Ivan the Terrible

IVAN he was christened because he was born in the days of universal enthusiasm when the Russian Ivan rose in his might and crushed to atoms the maleficent throne of the Romanoffs. "The Terrible" means only that his parents are young and ultra-modern and malign their offspring where the parents of old time bragged about them. Maligning is more piquant; and then too—but this is psychology of the unconscious—it wards off the evil eye. For himself, Ivan is just a wee mite of pink flesh and blue eyes and turned-up nose, sparse blond hair and a rather pathetic desire to please, as you can tell from the soft glow with which his eyes meet yours, if you know babies. His mother doesn't, and that Ivan seems to understand, for all the brevity of his tale of days. I have often observed on his face a thin veil of infantile despair, as one after another of his devices for pleasing fall flat.

"Ivan, Ivan, don't do that!" I've been tempted to cry out when I've observed him trying on his mother the art of rolling up his eyes to show all white. Doubtless that has worked on the Negro maid at the day nursery. But the effect on his mother is to produce a little shiver. That trick doesn't go well with a pink turned-up nose. His mother might take the will for the deed, you say. Yes: but she doesn't know babies.

"How preposterous!" I hear you murmur. "She has a baby: ergo, she knows babies." That, I admit, is the orthodox lore. With the birth of her first child, a vast volume of knowledge that she never before had a chance of acquiring is supposed to descend upon the mother. But in the face of universal opinion I deny that there is any evidence whatever in support of the theory of the miraculous afflatus of knowledge. The first baby—and any baby, for the matter of that—is a little stranger, under obligation to win his mother's heart if he would be happy, as the wandering youth of folk tales is under the obligation to win the heart of his princess. It is hard to say which has the more difficult task, but there is no doubt that the baby

has the advantage of a better technique, the more effective because it is erroneously assumed to be unconscious. The wandering youth usually failed; the baby usually succeeds. But not always, and Ivan had not succeeded. Of course his mother liked him, but she had retained her liberty. And from Ivan's point of view, that was failure.

Let it not be rashly assumed that Ivan is a stupid and incompetent baby. What has thwarted his enterprise is a mighty social force, the Economic Independence of Woman. Theodosia Garnett, Ivan's mother, is convinced that there is no majesty and no might save in the Independent Pay Envelope. Therefore for almost a year now, ever since Ivan was a month old, Theodosia has gone forth with her husband every morning on the 8:14 from the suburban village where I also live. Ivan spends his days in the efficient nursery conducted by Mrs. Holsworthy. The day nursery charges are twenty dollars a week, and Theodosia earns twenty-five. Her commutation is \$9.67 monthly and her lunches must cost fifteen dollars. Calculate for yourself the net economic gain due to Economic Independence. One day on the train in I started

gleefully to make the calculation for Theodosia's benefit. But Mr. Garnett trod on my foot. Usually when I debate with Theodosia about Ivan Mr. Garnett observes strict neutrality. The advantage lies with her, for she is a mother and what am I that I should presume to know anything about babies? But I have succeeded in creating the impression that I know economics; therefore Mr. Garnett will not permit the debate to enter the economic field where it might be dangerous.

"Of course it figures out absurdly," he admitted to me over the 'phone after we had arrived at our several offices. "But she makes herself think it pays. It's a principle with her to believe that. So I have to believe it, and you will, too, if you're going to ride in the same car with us."

Theodosia works in a department store. That, too, is principle. Economic Independence of Woman will get nowhere, she says, if it is confined to the fine arts and the higher professions. It must make its way among the masses of women who can't expect to do anything but take their places in trade and industry. In idle hours I sometimes go through the department

store aisles just to see what function in the concrete Theodosia is performing. The last time I was there I found her presiding over a sale of cretonnes—the most terrible cretonnes that can be found even in this day of designs originating for the most part in padded cells. I saw her calmly measure out an infinity of horror for a wan husband, by fatal error intrusted with discretion in the selection of household draperies. That cretonne haunts me still. Black ground; interlacing japonica stems; leaves of Paris green; flowers of London purple; peacocks outlined in white, with plumes of vitriol blue.

“So this is economic independence,” I remarked to Theodosia in the interval of customers. “Your firm took that poor citizen’s money away from him and slipped a curse on him besides. Your economic independence comes out of the booty.”

“I’m so glad I got rid of that cretonne,” replied Theodosia calmly. “There’s only a remnant left and somebody else will have to handle it.”

“You admit, then, that it was robbery,” I said severely.

Theodosia laughed. "It had been manufactured, so it had to be sold. I sold it. That's all there is to it."

On Labor Day I was sauntering about my yard, fretting over the ravages of the scale on my neglected pear tree when Theodosia and her husband stopped at my gate.

"Come along," called Theodosia. "We're going over to the day nursery to call on Ivan. Maybe when you see it you'll change your mind about it."

The day nursery is a quaint old colonial house, deep in the shade of ancient elms, just the kind of place that is supposed to appeal to babies. The door was opened by a harassed Czechoslovak or Jugo-Slav maid. She stared at us in bewilderment; plainly she did not recognize the Garnetts.

"New maid," I remarked as we seated ourselves in the "tastefully decorated" parlor, trying to ignore the shrill chorus of wailings from the rear of the house.

"Yes," said Theodosia, "Mrs. Holsworthy has no end of trouble keeping her maids."

"Labor turnover one thousand per cent," I translated. "Poor Ivan. No sooner does he

learn how to win one of them than she leaves. That accounts for his uncertain technique."

"Technique, technique," exclaimed Theodosia impatiently. "Will you never get over your fantastic theory of babies? But here comes Mrs. Holsworthy."

"Good-morning, dear parents," sounded a voice of clover honey. Theodosia presented me. Mrs. Holsworthy offered me a smooth, limp hand. She is a large woman with a brow nothing could ruffle, eyes vacuously serene, brown hair done most sedately, brown and most sedate dress. Just the type of woman that bachelor men and economically independent young women describe, God knows why, as a "motherly woman."

"I hear music in the nursery," said Mrs. Holsworthy sweetly. "Precious little souls, it's good for their lungs." She held up a plump forefinger. "If you will be very still, dear parents, you may come in and see them." She smiled winningly upon me. "You may come too, if a mere man knows how to be good."

The nursery was a long room with white enameled walls, white linoleum floors, blue curtains, blue shades, half drawn. Very aseptic, evi-

dently. There were eight white enamel cribs, each with its baby howling itself to a ruddy hue. In the act of crying all babies look much alike. Left to myself I could not have told which was Ivan. For guidance I glanced surreptitiously at Theodosia: mother instinct and all that. No, Theodosia was just as uncertain as I was. But Mrs. Holsworthy came to our relief.

"Here we have our dear little Ivan. Wonderful little man. What a splendid voice he has!"

Maybe it was a splendid voice, but it was growing hoarse. Whatever the occasion of his woe, it was plain that he had had enough of it. All he wanted was the slightest excuse for laughing. Just a word, just a pat on his little cheek would have sufficed. I glanced narrowly at the motherly Mrs. Holsworthy. Not the least indication that she had any perception of Ivan's state of mind. It was as clear as day that she never came among her charges except when there were visitors. For she moved serenely among the despairing babies like a Homeric goddess above the desperate slaughters of men.

"Isn't she wonderful?" cried Theodosia ecstatically as we issued from the gates of the day nursery.

"She is an alligator in disguise," I replied savagely.

Mr. Garnett coughed warningly but my opinions would out.

"She ought to be put in charge of baby rabbits. If you spoil one batch, there's another before you can begin to regret."

"Tell me, please," said Theodosia in a tense, even tone. "Do you *like* to be disagreeable? Or do you come by it through heredity?"

A fortnight later Mr. Garnett called at my office.

"I've missed you on the train the last few days. Well, Theodosia has thrown up her job."

"What?" I exclaimed. "How did it happen?"

"To put it in your terms, Ivan won her, at last."

"Does she consider it her duty?" I inquired cautiously.

"No. She considers it a vice. But she just can't help it."

"It looks as if it would last, then," I reflected.

"Of course it will last. You can't drag her away." Mr. Garnett rose to go. "Come and

see us. She will expect you to know it. But not to notice it."

The next Sunday afternoon I called on the Garnetts. Theodosia was busy teasing smiles out of Ivan. I talked about the probable length of the war, about reconstruction and whatever else there was that might not indicate that I noticed.

"I suppose you know I threw up my job," said Theodosia suddenly.

"Yes," I said. "It was a great blow to me."

"Did you see what this darling did?" cried Theodosia. "He understood what you said."

"Understood?" I repeated, mystified.

"Yes. You said blow and he blew."

"No!" I exclaimed. "That was a coincidence."

"Blow, darling!"

Ivan puckered up his smiling lips. "Whew!" he breathed manfully.

"I see," I remarked bitterly. "To all my grave philosophy on babies and the Economic Independence of Woman you turned a deaf ear. But this terrible little Ivan had only to acquire the art of blowing, and you were converted."

“All that grave philosophizing was nothing but words,” said Theodosia vindictively. “But when Ivan the Terrible blows——”

“Whew,” blew Ivan triumphantly.

XV

Carnegied

WHEN Hannis University was first admitted to the benefits of the Carnegie pension fund, there was not a member of the faculty who rejoiced more extravagantly than Professor Bowen. Ten years more of harness, and then liberty! For weeks the professor walked and read and lectured absently, in a dream, a dream of the Seven Hills of Rome and a quiet apartment near the Vatican library. He could already feel the marbly chill of the long corridors, and the quickening of his blood as, late in the afternoon, he would step out into the red Roman sunshine. How rapidly he would transform into finished tomes of clean, weighty text and multifarious footnotes all those literary projects, sketched in or just outlined, that had lain dormant for so many years in the drawers of his office desk. But that was ten years ago, and now, as he stood on the threshold of liberty, he hesitated. Retirement he felt sure would be op-

tional with him. The university would certainly prefer to keep him in active service. Should he, then, exercise his option? He still wanted his liberty. He still wanted to write his books. But a new problem had arisen to vex him, the problem of his successor. It is one thing to abandon your shoes. That may be very pleasant. It is a quite different thing to behold another standing in them. That is very disagreeable, unless your successor is worthy.

Now, a worthy successor is dreadfully hard for any man to find. In the last year Professor Bowen had again and again reviewed the qualifications of the three men holding rank under him. The oldest one was plainly disqualified; he had a mad wife, poor fellow, and his sorrows had played havoc with his scholarship. The next in rank was also disqualified. He had received his training in Germany and had got sundry articles into German *Zeitschriften*, an honor that had gone to his head and had made him a devoted partisan of the Kaiser. But the third assistant, Professor Jores, was politically correct and domestically neutral, being a bachelor, like Professor Bowen himself.

Jores was an alumnus of the university, an im-

portant point in his favor. He had been one of Professor Bowen's first and most brilliant students, and when he became instructor, he had made it his chief ambition to expound, elucidate and defend Professor Bowen's system of thought. It must be understood that forty years ago Professor Bowen was a brilliant radical in his branch of learning. In those days the prevailing school had striven to make out of this branch a religion of things as they are. The radicals had put all their faith in science, declaring their readiness to follow wherever science might lead. The fight between conservatives and radicals was bitter, and Professor Bowen and his disciple Jores kept it up long after all the conservatives had been exterminated. A new battle was now on, between the mechanists and the humanists, but of this conflict Bowen and Jores refused to take cognizance. They were still holding their old entrenchments.

All this should have made Professor Bowen favor Jores's candidacy for the headship. But Jores was too obviously eager to have the matter settled. He was taking it too much for granted that his chief would retire. He did not even maintain a decent attitude of regret over the

breaking of the old relation of master and disciple. Plainly Jores thought he could manage the department as well as it had been managed. Doubts naturally arose in Bowen's mind.

"Jores is a splendid fellow," Professor Bowen began to say to his confidants. "But is he the man to head a department in a great university? I fear not. He is an excellent teacher. In his thirty years of service I have never heard a single word of complaint from the students. But he is utterly devoid of originality. Every idea he has ever had can be traced to its source in other men's thinking." "Other men's?" Professor Bowen put it in the plural out of modesty. All his confidants were expected to know very well that Jores had traded exclusively on Bowen's intellectual capital.

"Vile old ingrate!" cried Jores, when the charge of lack of originality filtered through to him, as such charges do filter through even the tightest academic septa. And he reflected bitterly upon the ignominy of the position he had occupied. Had he not fought fiercely for Bowen's doctrines in the home faculty group and at association meetings abroad? Had he not exerted superhuman ingenuity to give con-

tent to Bowen's dogmas even when he knew them to be empty, to make them plausible even when they were clearly wrong? Genial critics had called him Bowen's *fidus Achates*, and brutal critics had likened the pair of Hannis professors to a bantam hen with a Shanghai chick that refuses to be manumitted. The edge of the comparison was sharpened by the facts of physical appearance, for Bowen was short and stocky, while Jores was tall, lank, and, as the stock breeders say, "growthy."

At first relations between the two professors remained outwardly cordial, but each seized every opportunity to shoot a poisoned shaft at the other through the fog of faculty gossip. Soon the students began to suspect that there was trouble in the department. Bowen's favorite pupils found themselves receiving harsh treatment and bad grades in Jores's classes. They complained to Bowen, who retaliated by failing two men who were too dear to the heart of Jores. "Either the hen or the chick; never both," was a registration formula that began to circulate among the more canny students. In the end Bowen could not resist the temptation to comment superciliously in his lectures on the

inelasticity of mind of a certain teacher, whom the students found no difficulty in identifying as Jores. Jores made occasion to warn his students against sundry terrible fallacies, exploded thirty years ago, but still cherished by certain scholars who had failed to keep abreast of the times. The students were delighted. Men who had never before attended a lecture out of their regular course began to flock to Bowen's and Jores's lecture rooms. The faculty was scandalized, but the president's office remained deaf and blind. After something of a scene at Mrs. Harwood's dinner party, campus hostesses found it wise to adopt the formula, "Either the hen or the chick; never both." The president not only failed to observe this rule, but at a dinner given in honor of Dr. McAndrew, a visiting professor, the president actually seated the enemies side by side.

The visiting professor was a budding authority in the same field in which Bowen and Jores were fighting. He was, as he explained with great vivacity, a champion of the humanistic tendency. Almost the two enemies nudged each other in sympathy. On one thing they were in accord: the humanistic tendency was just one of

those pathetic fads that arise every generation to suck the chaff of phrase makers away from the wheat of sound scholarship. The visiting professor babbled on and on, the president smiling charitably upon him. Professor Bowen made a measured remark, calculated to prick some bubble of the visitor's invention. Dr. McAndrew disposed of it with an epigram, quick and shallow, that made Jores's comb swell with indignation. He struck heavily at the interloper with an "It is an accepted fact." But Dr. McAndrew parried with a lightness and flippancy that outraged all Professor Bowen's sense of scholarly decency.

Bowen and Jores were closer together in spirit than they had been for two years. Almost with alacrity they accepted the president's request to go with him to his study to look at the new books.

"You will be pleased with some news I have to communicate," said the president. "Dr. McAndrew will be with us next year. He has accepted the post that will be vacated by Professor Bowen's retirement."

"But Mr. President!" gasped Professor Bowen. "Of course I had intended to retire.

But hadn't I a right to be consulted? Besides, the men on the ground should have had something to say. We have all favored Jores as my successor."

"No," said Jores bitterly. "After my long occupancy of a subordinate position I should not be well qualified for the executive work of a department head."

"Exactly," said the president quickly. "No, that isn't the reason. You see, my dear Jores, you are an alumnus of the institution. And while we love our alumni, still, there is much criticism, among our students and in the town, of our tendency to inbreed, as it were. What we need, everybody says, is a little new blood. I'm sorry, but you understand, don't you?"

"Yes," said Jores. "But you will understand that, in the circumstances, it is impossible for me to remain."

"I feared you might feel that way," said the president, in a tone of regret. "Still, I'm not sure it's not better for your career to go out into the world. They say a rolling stone gathers no moss, but I think there is something to be said on the other side. And if you do make up your mind to seek opportunity elsewhere, it will re-

lieve the university of some embarrassment. Professor McAndrew made it a condition of his acceptance that we should find a place for his friend Dr. Nott, who collaborated with him on his great work."

"I see," said Jores, "you have in anticipation accepted my resignation, and you have in fact filled my place. I thank you for a pleasant evening. Good-night."

"I thank you too," cried Bowen. "And let me tell you, Mr. President, that it's a damned shame."

"You are forgetting yourself, Professor Bowen," said the president severely. "You are forgetting where you are."

"I don't care. It is a damned shame. That's just what it is."

A dozen student bands, prowling about at various hours of the night, gave testimony to the portent—Bowen and Jores, wandering about the campus arm in arm, apparently sentimentalizing over the landmarks. Bits of their conversation were overheard; they were recalling old memories. The next morning's bulletin reported Bowen *Carnegied*, Jores resigned. They are living together in a dim apartment in the Campus

Martius, engaged in composing a monumental work that will sweep away the humanistic school like feathers before an honest gale. They are living on a single Carnegie pension, which suffices for happiness in spite of high prices, under the red Roman sun.

XVI

Suh-Ho in Praise of Footbinding

A BARBAROUS custom, you call it. Barbarous it cannot be, since it has never prevailed among barbarians and only became established in the oldest and maturest civilization in the world. What you mean is that footbinding is painful, unnatural. It is indeed painful, exquisitely painful. But one of the measures of civilization is pain. Central Africa has no tortures so intense as those endured in New York or London. Footbinding is unnatural, true; but how much of civilization is natural? When the medical missionaries first exhibited by X-ray photographs the inside of a bound foot I was shocked, I admit. All those little bones distorted, twisted, run together in spongy masses—ugh! You would be shocked, too, if you could see X-ray photographs of the inside of some of your own women's minds. Soon, however, you would recover from the shock as I did. Civilization cares nothing for the inside, so the externals

are fair. My lady's lily foot, your lady's lily mind: these are altogether lovely, so far as you and I can see. We shall leave it to the specialist to fret over what lies within.

A barbarous custom? Let us look to the real ways of the barbarians as they are recorded in the venerable Ghin texts, over two thousand years old. In those ancient days the wild Chô-su tribes roamed over the slopes of Altai. It is written that the Chô-su thought it sacrilege to add to the disabilities that God had imposed upon the female sex. Therefore men and women dressed alike, fared alike, joined equally in the chase, went side by side into battle, shared equally in deliberations and decisions even of greatest import. And sometimes the wife proved more skilful in the chase or more valiant in war than her husband, and often and often a woman's voice prevailed in the tribal councils. These were true barbarians.

Two thousand years ago your own ancestors were barbarians, very like the Chô-su. They too were content with the disabilities imposed upon women by God. But little by little you have become more civilized and have added steadily to the disabilities of woman. She may no longer

dress like you, exercise freely like you. You do not let her say and hear many of the things you say and hear; many things you desire to know you seek to prevent her from knowing. From the chase, from war, from tribal councils, you exclude her altogether. You do not bind her feet; not yet. But you are new to civilization and inexpert in the science of means and ends. By your clumsy methods you have succeeded in improving a small fraction of your women in the degree appropriate to a high civilization. Bind their feet and you will succeed with all of them.

You shrink from the cruelty of footbinding. It is not cruel since it is for the good of all, women as well as men. It is painful—for child and parents. You suppose that we in China do not love our daughters, but only our sons? It is not true. We are a tender-hearted people, and after the first chill of disappointment our hearts grow very warm to the wee pale sprites that have come to share our lives. I have a little daughter of my own, and, while I write this at my ease, somewhere in China my little girl sits mournfully on a mat, gripping her knees with her tiny hands as if this would stop the aching.

The twinges reach me here, through ten thousand miles of space. "A barrel of tears for each pair of bound feet," says the proverb. That is an exaggeration. My little girl wept at first, bitterly, but soon she dropped into silent despair. It was an unusually difficult case because we began late. In my family we had always begun to bind at three. But my wife would plead, "A few days more for the little twinkling feet." "It will be all the harder," I would grumble. "This hopping about makes the feet big and sensitive." But she was such a merry bird-like little thing, and at our first attempts to put on the tight bandages she made such piteous gestures with her chubby arms, as if despairing of the world since we could be so cruel, that we put it off far too long. But the worst is over now. There has been little sleep under my roof for the last year. A barrel of tears? Yes, but they were the mother's.

Footbinding is a harsher duty now than it was a generation ago, for then it was never questioned. But now we have a great number of irresponsible young men of good family who have been abroad, or have read foreign books. They are like your parlor revolutionaries; their

constant song is, "All this must go; requirement of offspring, reverence for parents, sound education, footbinding, all must go." No man of sense pays any attention to their paradoxes. Except when you have lain awake night after night listening to a sobbing child. Then the demon of doubt prompts you to ask yourself, "What if it is unnecessary? What if footbinding must go?" These new ideas are but a pest to afflicted parents in the performance of their difficult duties. Footbinding cannot go. "The natural foot" that the reformers prate about, what is it but a fad? It will work its transitory mischief and disappear.

Superficial occidental writers assert that the bound foot is to be explained by a perverted æsthetic sense in the male sex. This is to miss its deep spiritual significance. The bound foot is the condition of a life of dignity for man, of a life of contentment for woman. Let me make this clear. I am a Chinese fairly typical of my class. I pored too much over classic texts in my youth and dimmed my eyes, narrowed my chest, crooked my back. My memory is not strong, and in an old civilization there is a vast deal to learn before you can know anything.

Accordingly among scholars I cut a poor figure. I am timid, and my voice plays me false in gatherings of men. But to my footbound wife, confined for life to her house except when I bear her in my arms to her palanquin, my stride is heroic, my voice is that of a roaring lion, my wisdom is of the sages. To her I am the world; I am life itself. As you see me I seem little and weak, but as my wife sees me I am colossally great. Therefore life seems good to me. I need not go forth to strive on the battlefield, nor to seek even more difficult glory in the arts of peace. Life seems good to my wife also. All the petty services she undertakes for me are satisfying to her because they are illuminated by my greatness. All her unending labors in caring for my children are agreeable to her because these children have the seed of greatness in them.

Every man in all the world desires to be a hero; every woman in the world desires to be the wife of a hero. In China, thanks to footbinding, these desires are realized. How is it with you? I have often sought light on this question. How is it possible for Americans and Europeans to seem great men in the eyes of their big, fine,

active wives? As I find it the custom among you to discuss such subjects freely, I am wont to put the question directly: "Are you a great man in your wife's estimation?" "Of course," you reply, but your eyelids droop and I am puzzled. If I am questioning a lady I ask, "Does your husband really seem a great man to you?" "Of course," she replies, but she opens her eyes very wide and I am still more puzzled. To be great men to such wives as I have seen in western lands, that is what you call a big contract! It would be different if you were all so robust and eagle-eyed as some of the Rocky Mountain men, who, like the old Chô-su, believe it a sacrilege to add to the disabilities imposed upon the female sex by God. But you men of the cities look to me very much like Chinese. How are you able to play the superior part proper to the head of a civilized household?

I surmise that you realize your predicament and are taking active measures to strengthen your position against further weakening. You are beginning to see the necessity of standing for the civilized ideal of woman affected with more disabilities than God had intended. As a representative of a much riper civilization, I may as-

sure you with authority that you are on the right track. I cannot give similarly unqualified approval to the means you employ. You handicap woman in professional life, discriminate against her in industry, belittle her intellectual achievements, or, if these are too palpably solid, you cry down the value of her personality. So far, good. But the dangerous barbaric spirit of independence among women cannot be held in check merely by throwing barriers across one and another avenue of expression. What you need for the civilizing of women is a simple and radical strategy. Bind their feet.

XVII

The Chances of Being Married

BY common consent a woman's matrimonial chances are properly to be treated humorously, statistically, or "broadly." I am without sense of humor, I abhor statistics, and I am clean-minded; yet I feel there is something I have a right to say on the subject. Yes, as you infer, I am a woman. And as I am still alive, I have been compelled to take extreme precautions to preserve my anonymity, lest my friends presume to a sympathy over-personal. Who the writer is no other woman knows, and only one man. And he is a sociologist, a living machine, in which mountainous heaps of statistics have been milled—statistics of births and deaths, of poverty and riches, of crime, insanity and suicide. These last are most to his taste. He gloats upon bleak conclusions, deductions of despair. I call him my friend; and when life runs too utterly gray, I go to him, as the Indian woman bereft of her child went to the medicine man for bitter roots to gnaw. And that no trace of my-

self may appear in this paper, I have had him revise and rearrange, expand and delete, as seemed good to him, to the profit of the logic, perhaps, and certainly to the prejudice of the meaning.

I am twenty-nine, and I aver myself to be of sound body and mind. I spring from one of the oldest and best of American families; my forbears, through several generations, have been cultivated men and women, acquitting themselves well and resolutely in the world. I was graduated from one of the better women's colleges, and trained myself for a profession, through which I win a fair income. My professional standing is good, and in the reunions of my class I am spoken of as a woman who has achieved success. I have been thrown into contact with a great number of men, young, middle-aged and old. But my life has yielded not one single proposal of marriage, not one sentimental advance. No, this is not quite the truth, and why should I not be truthful, under the impenetrable veil of my anonymity? There have been advances, with obvious purpose of shallow adventure, repelled at first with burning indignation, later with disgust, finally only with weariness.

ness. Here, you suspect, is a clue? Not at all; your own sisters and daughters could recount to you similar experiences of their own.

"She's probably very homely; she hasn't any magnetism," you say with air of finality. I shall make no extravagant claims to personal charm; you would not be so vehement in my dispraise as I myself often am. Still, I am very like my grandmother; a replica, my grandfather used to assert, when I would invade the family treasure-chest and dress myself in its quaint and cumbersome robes. "My sweetest Nancy, come to life again!" But two good men fought for my grandmother's hand, and one was killed. Imagine how the event glowed, horribly and entrancingly, in the family memory. It made every boy born to the house feel somewhat more of a man; it made every girl conscious of herself as worth a man's blood. I grew up to that consciousness myself. But no man has appeared who would prick a drop from his finger for me.

"It is all a matter of demand and supply," says my friend the sociologist. "In your grandmother's day there were two eligible men to one eligible woman. Hence the women were all fair and the men were brave. To-day the proportions

are reversed. Therefore the men have become prigs and dandies, or else brutes, and the women—of course they are still fair—” do you catch his complacent cackle?—“ but they’re a drug on the market. Content yourselves with the consolations of philosophy, my dears.”

Such a disproportion of the sexes seems something improbable, contrary to nature, does it not? But the sociologist offers an interpretation which, stripped of his tedious scientific phraseology, runs about like this: A change has come over the world, ominous for the middle class, to which, the sociologist says, I belong by virtue of the fact that my family has been represented in the pulpit and at the bar, in politics and in business. All girls born into the middle class stay in it; only by desperate measures can a middle-class woman get herself *déclassée*. Of the boys, one-half succeed in keeping their footing, the other half fail to win position and livelihood, and so fall out and disappear. The places of the failures are taken by men rising from the lower classes, but these bring up their women folk with them. Thus there will be at any time two eligible middle-class women to one man. Says the sociologist, “Of the hundreds and thousands of

blooming young women issuing from the schools and colleges, each with her face serenely masking her dream of a prince and domestic felicity, less than one-half will ever be married, scarcely one-half will even be seriously wooed." Inspiring thought, fit for a sociologist! But will not most of these young women remain single through choice? Does not each one you know tell you she prefers her "career" to matrimony? To be sure; I myself have told many of you this; and you, O monuments of credulity, have believed it.

Still, had I not one chance out of two? No. According to my authority, the scanty supply of eligible men is subject to a corner more efficacious than any existing in the business world. The machinery by which the corner is engined is known as "society." "Let us analyze the conditions existing in almost any middle-class circle," intones the sociologist. "Such a circle may be conceived as a primitive polity, in the matriarchal stage of development. At the head of it stands usually a dowager, whose word, for some good historical reason, is law. Next below her, a small number of women, minor dowagers and middle-aged wives, making up, together with

the immediate members of their families, 'the' people. Below this, a number of grades of the 'possible,' to be admitted to social functions when mass is desired, to be excluded when the requirement is quality.

"This organization has absolute power over the eligible middle-class bachelor. It can offer him the pleasures and the prestige of admission to the most select gatherings; it can offer him the advantages of easy social intercourse with his elders, who control the avenues to success in the professions, politics and business. What can he give in return for such privileges? Nothing less than his passive self. He must submit cheerfully to being thrown accidentally, with miraculous frequency, into the society of the selfsame girl, until finally, be she beautiful or only *piquante*—there are no other grades among 'the' people—he succumbs to the forces of propinquity and the reasonable expectation of everybody who counts. Thus does the dowager machine impound the whole supply of available men, letting none of it escape so long as any of the maidens in favor with the machine remain unmatched. Was there ever so ironclad a monopoly?"

I do not accept the sociologist's doctrine without qualification; still less do you. But you won't deny that there is a grain in it. We have all seen the mechanism working, and working with remarkable efficiency. It has never been operated in my behalf. My parents were at no pains to win a place in "society." My father, a country lawyer, immersed himself in his briefs; what time he could afford for social intercourse he devoted to the misfits, the poor young men, working their way through college under handicaps of ill health or repellent personality; the reformers, whose ethical zeal wrought grievous wrong to their economic status; the writers whose books had nothing to recommend them but their literary merit. A queer lot, I can assure you, matrimonially utterly ineligible themselves, and scarecrows to such eligibles as did occasionally slip through to us in consequence of defects in the dowager machine.

Let me not seem to be bitter against the dowager machine. If it robbed me of what I may, in my anonymity, brazenly describe as my rightful chance to satisfy the most fundamental of human needs, it increased the chance of some middle-class sister of mine, who would perhaps

have relished "economic independence" and professional success even less than I do. To quote my sociological authority again, "The machine affects the distribution of eligibles, but it does not affect the supply of them. To smash the machine would leave the problem of the middle-class spinster untouched. The solution lies deeper.

"The time will come when the women of the middle class will become conscious of the fact that, though unregarded by the men of their own class, to the men of the working class they are princesses. It is every man's secret desire to marry above his station—cosmic recognition of the fact that man tends to grow toward his wife's level. You middle-class women can therefore offer a most redoubtable competition to the working-class women, and appropriate to yourselves the choicest men of the class. All that deters you is fear of the talk of others of your class—especially the talk of the very dowagers who are fencing you off from men of your own kind. Now, as to your own case. There is *Giucciardini*——"

I break off the interview with every visible sign of outraged dignity. *Giucciardini* was origi-

nally a bootblack, under a padrone; next he set up a chair of his own; soon he branched out into peanuts and fruit; now he owns the best shoe store in town, and is said to have a lot of stock in the bank and the wholesale grocery. He is only thirty, and there cannot be the least doubt that he will become so rich that the future Mrs. Gucciardini will be admitted to the town's elect. I do not need the sociologist's myopic eyes to help me perceive that Gucciardini is handsome; Praxiteles never modeled a more beautiful head and torso. Gucciardini speaks purer English than do Americans, and Tuscan falls from his lips like music and red wine. He has the most exquisite manners, and he fits a shoe with a tingling deftness that makes one muse. I could have—pardon the expression—Gucciardini. How I know this I cannot divulge even here. I know it, and so does the sociologist. But it is impossible. I am afraid. If it turned well, I should still be *déclassée*; if it turned ill—as even equal matings do often enough—where should I stand? It may be that the time will come when one woman of the middle class will accept the risk, then another, then whole schools of them, and that finally the men of the class will

wake to find half their sisters and cousins going over to the enemy. But this will not be in my period of life, or at any rate not in my period of youth, which comes to the same thing in the end.

When I was a child my father once pointed out to me a little cherry-tree, the bark of which had been completely gnawed around by a marauding rabbit. "It will bloom more beautifully than ever, and then it will die." Day by day I watched the tree. Its buds came forth in due season, and burst into an efflorescence beyond my imaginings. Then death fell upon it, and its petals shriveled up like tea leaves; its olive-green bark blackened and cracked in the spring sun. That tree comes vividly to my mind when I survey the groups of young women issuing from the college gates. Did women ever bloom more richly? One-half of them will never marry. We come of infinitely long lines of ancestresses who mated and bore children and reared them in care and joy. And so it is probably in our blood that we feel a bit lonely, at the uttermost edge of the universe, the petals of our lives shriveling and dropping one by one into the abyss.

XVIII

My Uncle

MY uncle only by marriage, he is naturally the less intelligible and the more intriguing to me. I can't say with assurance whether I feel absolutely at home with him or not, but I think I do. Always he has treated me with the utmost kindness. That he regards me exactly as a nephew of the blood, he makes frequent occasion to assure me, especially on his birthday, which we all make much of, since it is about the only day when we are chartered to sentimentalize quite shamelessly over him. But behind his solemn face and straight, quizzical gaze, I often detect a lurking reservation in his judgment of me. He thinks, I believe, that I have not been altogether weaned of the potentates and powers I abjured when I crossed the water to become a member of his family. Not that he greatly cares. Potentates and powers, emperors, kings, princes, are treasured words in his oratorical vocabulary—he could not very well do without them. He

is a democrat, and he declares that in the presence of hereditary majesties, he would most resolutely refuse to bend the knee. No doubt he would, and his instinct is correct æsthetically as well as morally. It's a stiff knee he wears, and you can't help smiling at the thought of the two long members of his leg, tightly cased in striped trousers, arranging themselves in an obsequious right angle. Erect and stiff, chest out, chin whiskers to front, eyes blinking independently, my uncle is superb. Or when he raises his hat with a large, outward gesture of his arm, bowing slightly from the shoulders, in affable salutation. Or most of all, when his fists clench, his jaws display big nervous knots, his eyes gleam with hard blue light in wrath over some palpable iniquity, some base cowardice, some outrageous act of cruelty or oppression.

The mood of rage is, to be sure, infrequent with him, and he prides himself in a self-control that forbids him to act upon it. Therefore, certain cocky foreign fellows, upholders of the duty of fighting at the drop of the hat, have charged that our uncle would place peace above honor. And some of us, his nephews, are not exactly easy under the charge. It seems to reflect on

us. But most of us really know better. Our uncle hates trouble, and prefers argument to fists. But nobody had better presume too much upon his distaste for violence.

Pugnacity, declares my uncle, is a form of sentimentalism, and all sentimentalism is despicable. This is a practical world. Determine the value of what you are after and count the cost. And wherever you can, reduce all items to dollars and cents. "Aha!" cry the hostile critics of our house, "what a gross materialist!" And some, even of the nephews of the blood, repeat the taunt behind our good uncle's back. At first I too thought there might be something in it. But I was forced to a different view by dint of reflection on the notorious fact that my uncle is far readier in a good cause to "shell out" his dollars and cents than any of his idealistic critics. Reduction of a problem to dollars and cents, I have come to see, is just his means of arriving at definiteness. My uncle wants to do a good business, whether in the gross joys of the flesh or in the benefits of salvation. The Lord's cause, he thinks, ought to be as solvent as the world's. A naïve view? To be sure, but not one that argues a base soul.

This insistence of my uncle on definiteness, on the financial solvency of every enterprise, does to be sure get on the nerves of many of us. He'll drop into your studio, dispose his long, bony body in your most comfortable chair and ruminate for hours while you work. You are immersed in a very significant problem. You are at the point, we will say, of discovering how to convey the sound of bells by pure color. "May I ask," he says finally, "what in thunder are you trying to do?" You explain at length, enthusiastically. He hears you through, with visible effort to suspend judgment. You pause and scan his face for a responsive glow. He rises, pats you gently on the shoulder. "My boy, I can put you into a good job down in the stockyards. Fine prospects, and a good salary to begin with. I ran in to see your wife and youngsters yesterday and they're looking rather peaked. Not much of a living for them in this sort of thing, you know. Of course it is mighty interesting. But don't you think you could manage to do something with it in your free time?"

It can't be denied, in the matter of the family relation my uncle is hopelessly reactionary. In his view almost the whole duty of man is to

keep his wife well housed, well dressed, contented, and his children plump and rosy. To abate a tittle from this requirement my uncle regards as pure embezzlement. You try to make him see the counterclaims upon you of science, literature, art. "Yes, yes, those things are all very fine, but will you rob your own wife and children for them?"

I wonder whether this myopia of my uncle is due to the fact that he is a confirmed old bachelor, and all women and children are to him pure ideals, as much sweeter than all other ideals as they are more substantial? He poses, to be sure, as a depreciator of woman. "Just like a woman," "women's frivolity," "useless little feminine trinkets," are phrases always on his lips. But watch his caressing expression as he listens to the chatter of Cousin Thisbe, the most empty-headed little creature who ever wore glowing cheeks and bright curls. Let anybody get into trouble with his wife or sweetheart, and my uncle straightway takes up the cudgels for the lady. The merits of the case don't matter: a lady is always right, or if she isn't, it's a mighty mean man who'll insist on it.

His nephews of the blood are firmly convinced

that the reason why our uncle is such a fool about women in general is because he has never been in love with any woman in particular. Thus do members of a family blind themselves with dogmas about one another. I, being more or less of an outsider, can observe without preconceptions. Now I assert, in spite of his consistent pose of serene indifference to particular charms, my uncle's temperament is that of a man forever in love with somebody or other. He is strong, he is simple, he is pure, and should he escape the dart? Depend on it, he has fallen in love not once or twice, but often and often. And the probabilities are, he has been loved, though not so often. And—this would be an impious speculation if I were nephew of the blood—how has he behaved, in the rare latter event? As a man in the presence of a miracle done for his sole benefit. He has exulted, then doubted its reality, then betaken himself to the broad prairie, where he is most at home, to cool his blood in the north wind, and restore himself to the serenity, the freedom from entanglements, befitting an uncle at the head of his tribe. This, you say, is all conjecture, deduced from the behavior of those of his nephews who most

resemble him? No. Do you not recall that early affair of his, with the dark vivacious lady—Marianne, I believe, was her name? Do you not recall a later affair with a very young, cold lady from the land of the snows? Do you not recall his maturer devotion to the noble lady of the trident, his cousin? And—but I'll not descend to idle gossip.

As you can see, I do not wholly accept my uncle, as he is. I wish he weren't so insistent upon reducing everything to simple, definite terms, whether it will reduce to such terms or not. I wish he would give more thought to making his conduct correct as well as unimpeachable. I'm for him when his inferiors laugh at him, but I wish he would manage to thwart their malicious desire to laugh. I wish he were less disposed to scoff gently at my attempts to direct his education. Just the same, he is the biggest, kindest, most honest and honorable tribal head that ever lived. And you won't find a trace of these reservations in the enthusiasm with which I shall wish him many thousands of happy returns, next Fourth of July.

XIX

The Fear of God

THAT is what Mr. Harold Cranfield says is pressing upon him. I should myself call it something else. Perhaps social-political jimjams would be as good as any other name for it.

Mr. Cranfield is one of those prosperous American business men who up to a year ago believed unshakably that the existing economic and social system was just as solid and enduring as the granite hills. Every man for himself; but every man, in seeking his own selfish good, destined by unerring economic law to serve to the utmost the interests of his fellow man: that was the essence of the present system as he expounded it. The true nature of the system was first revealed to Mr. Cranfield forty years ago, when he was a student at Yale. Laid up in his room by a broken rib—so he tells the story—he was driven by boredom to turn the pages of a volume of Adam Smith, foisted upon him by a

professorial friend who had shrewdly guessed that the student's mind might be receptive to knowledge when his body was broken: it never was when he could be up and about. And then his eyes fell upon the demonstration of the true place of individual selfishness in the Divine scheme of the world. It took hold of him with the force of evidence, and from that day to about a year ago he never doubted it, nor did he doubt that it could be made equally clear to all men who were endowed with the light of reason. That meant at least enough men to control the political destinies of the world.

Provided that men generally received enlightenment, Mr. Cranfield used to argue, there could be no question whatever about the stability of the present order, founded as it was on hard fact and right reason. Therefore Mr. Cranfield was a liberal. He stood for the utmost freedom of thought and speech and of the press, that the truth might have an open field in which to meet and crack the bones of error. To be sure, there were socialists and anarchists at large who challenged everything, and there were social reformers besides who challenged specific parts of the existing system. Sentimentalists,

all of them; or cheap fellows who had to win personal notoriety, if by no other method, then by standing on a street corner and bawling out that two and two make four only because the capitalist exploiters will have it so. Can't you hear him growing boisterously witty over them, from his seat of authority at the head of his dinner table? Picture him, erect, robust, his massive head crowned with gray hair, rebellious to the smoothing brush, his clear eyes beaming with good nature, the healthy red of his cheeks glowing through the gray of a well-clipped beard. He was magnificent, in his good spirits, and so was his table, with its gorgeous china and chastely designed silver, its ranks of glasses aspiring to good things at the hands of a butler trained to distribute his gifts as unobtrusively as the fairies move when they distribute dew among the eager flowers. Opposite sat his wife, more beautiful in late middle age than any girl, with eyes brighter than the diamonds glistening upon her breast. There were two white-shouldered daughters, one just come out, and all demure glances, the other a little more mature, discreetly conscious of the fact that a king had spoken of her as that impossibly beautiful Amer-

ican girl. It was not a very great king, to be sure, but a great connoisseur. Other ladies were there too, beautiful, of course, and men, very correct and handsome, real financial leaders and amateurs of art and politics. And very likely—so catholic were Mr. Cranfield's tastes—there was also a place for some member of the intellectual proletariat, a little uncertain of the ceremonial of the courses and often apparently sunk in deep thought when in fact only waiting for a cue. Woe to him if the lady on his right, addict of subtle malice, gave him the wrong cue.

All that was a year ago, but now a vast change has come over Mr. Cranfield. The buoyant optimism is gone. Bolshevism, hideous conception, has got into Mr. Cranfield's mind, and crashes about destructively like a gun carriage broken loose on the deck of a foundering ship. In dark tenements of New York you may find pale men and hectic cheeked women poring over typewritten bulletins which report that things are moving fast in Germany, France, Italy, England: that social discontent is gathering head in Chicago, St. Louis, Amarillo and Tucson. They read, and believe, sure that if they can live a little longer, they will see with their own eyes

the Great Revolution, which shall make all things over, descending from Heaven in a chariot of fire. They believe, but no more vividly than Mr. Cranfield fears. To him there is Bolshevism in every bush, and his knees knock together as he passes by.

"The world is going to perdition," he groans. "Did you see that account of how the Bolsheviks have got hold of Mexico? No, sir: you're wrong: it's not merely an expansionist yarn to work up sentiment for an invasion: it's true, and the sooner we send our armies down there to clean out Carranza and his whole gang, the better. Have you heard how Trotzky has managed to send four hundred million rubles into our own country, for propaganda? Paper rubles? No, sir: gold, good red Russian gold: I got it from a secret service agent who has seen it. The sooner we stop monkeying with those propagandists, the better. Shoot them: or better, hang them in Union Square, a dozen of them, every day. That will teach the riff-raff what's what."

Propaganda: that is the great menace of the age as Mr. Cranfield sees it. It is an infection, that spreads faster and farther than Spanish in-

fluenza. Our only hope is to localize the infection, destroy its foci. A whiff of grape shot, that is what is needed. Jails and machine guns, there lies our only hope. And suppose they are taken over by the enemy? God help us then, but we will fight, fight till the last man of us is killed. Then the Bolsheviki may have this world, and fight among themselves till the food gives out and they all starve to death.

"I don't think it's very nice of you, Papa, to talk about dying to the last man and leaving the world to the Bolsheviki. What will become of us women?" Thus speaks Alice, débutante daughter a year ago, but now a very self-possessed, self-determined young woman. She has been engaged in war-work. It was her job to meet incoming boats with an ambulance and carry the sick and wounded to the hospitals. She did it with spirit and nerve, as I can testify, having all but come to my end under the wheels of her drab colored government car, crashing through the crowds as if accidents didn't matter, since an ambulance was at hand. She gave me a nonchalant nod of recognition as I leapt for safety behind an L post. She was exquisite in her khaki uniform, with scarce a yellow curl

escaping the prison of her little cap. Glowing cheeks, shining eyes: how must she have appeared to her wounded charges? "They all adore me, and I believe a lot of them are Bolsheviks at heart." Perhaps they are, but if Bolsheviks are human beings, of course they adore Alice.

"What will become of you women?" Mr. Cranfield repeats slowly. "That is why we have got to fight."

"Until you are all exterminated," says Alice remorselessly. "And then?"

"And then? It drives me crazy to think of it."

"Well, Papa, I think we women will manage to take care of ourselves, whatever happens."

"Take care of yourselves!" exclaims Mr. Cranfield angrily. "You foolish child, you don't know what you are talking about." It is an especially sore point with him, that neither his wife nor his daughters will share his fears.

"Girls are queer creatures," he philosophized, after we had retired to his cozy study to smoke and argue out the problem of Bolshevism. "Now look at that girl. Born to luxury, bred

in luxury, she'd be in despair if she couldn't have everything she wants. When she marries, fifty thousand a year will be the least she can live on. And if her husband can't make it I suppose she'll come home. But tell her that when the Bolsheviki come she'll be glad to share a crust out of a dirty pocket or eat stew out of a common dish with a crew of riff-raff, it doesn't worry her a bit. It will be more interesting, she says. We have a terribly dull time, she says, seeing nobody but stiff bourgeoisie. The proletariat are much more intelligent. She learned that in war-work."

"That sounds to me as if Bolshevism had taken root in your own house," I ventured.

"Maybe it has. Of course I don't take her too seriously. But that's just the danger with Bolshevism. It gets hold of the rising generation. It's taking root everywhere. What has come over the world, anyhow? Labor used to be satisfied with what it got, even when it got little."

"Oh, was it?" I demanded. "You have forgotten the inscription on this rug." It was a thick-napped Syrian rug of wine-colored ground, bordered with an ominous inscription in broad

letters of gold. "Think not that palace walls can shield thee from the sword of wrath of a just God." So Dr. Leib had interpreted it, and in the old, secure days we used to make merry over this richly glowing curse wrought by an unknown sweated worker of the Lebanon against the mighty who should tread upon the fruits of his labor.

"There has always been some discontent," Mr. Cranfield admitted. "But it never grew into a system till now. It never was a real menace. We were sleeping. We should have stopped it at the beginning."

"Yes," I said, "as you used to say there are reforms long overdue, and a need of more thoroughgoing education——"

"Reforms! Education! Bah! Haven't we reformed for generations, and have we any security to-day against wholesale robbery and universal murder? Guns and jails, those are what we need. And strong men at the head of affairs who won't temporize."

"And none of our old liberal talk of the harmony of class interests," I suggested.

"No, none of that," Mr. Cranfield assented vigorously. "Harmony of interest, what rot!

I've got what I've got, and they want it. Well, we'll fight, that's all."

"No more pretense of democracy, of equality of worth and all that sort of thing," I added. "It just leads to fraternizing."

"That's exactly it. Look at Alice, now. You can't take her too seriously, of course; but it's weakening to have people express such views, even in fun. All of us who have anything have just got to stand together, and no quarter."

That is where Mr. Cranfield, ancient liberal of the prosperous class, now takes his stand. Ghost ridden, you say? Yes; but the fear of ghosts is just as real as any other. And just as infectious.

XX

Evalina

THEY were celebrating the decennial of their graduation from the engineering college. Technically I did not belong there, but the committee had dug out the fact that I had once been made an honorary member of the class, and accordingly voted to overlook my disqualifications and invited me to the banquet. Those disqualifications were grave, for the banquet was to be of the usual college reunion type, challenging a more persevering digestion than mine, and the talk was to be of cantilevers and turbines of types quite transcending my imagination. But there is always food for reflection in a reunion of collegians ten years out in the world. They have changed so unforeseeably, or have so unforeseeably remained the same. Accordingly I accepted the invitation, and, as I had anticipated, had a bad time with the food and the conversation, but much opportunity for sage reflection.—Yes, the prevailing effect of

practical life is depressing. These men, mostly robust and of prosperous appearance, sounded rather hollow as they thumped one another in the exchange of technical narrative or untechnical anecdote. Ten years ago spirits mounted higher. So everybody seemed to recognize, disconsolately, until the conversation gave way to the college songs. At least they could roar still.

“Ten years have gone round and I’ve not got
a dollar

Evalina still waits in that green grassy
hollow—”

They sang it with great gusto, as men of whom it couldn’t be true. Especially boisterous was the singing of the man on my right, a spare, brisk man, looking rather younger than the rest, rather more conspicuously well-dressed. On close inspection there was something artificial about his youth, and his whole make-up, you concluded, was not chic after all, but just on the margin of the flashy. I racked my memory for the details of his college life. I could not remember anything definite, except that I used to encounter him rather frequently around the Arts College, in the company of a very attrac-

tive and intelligent girl student. Oh yes, an engagement had been announced at Commencement time, I recalled. But the man beside me wore no ring.

"Where is Evalina?" I demanded, as the singing subsided.

He started slightly. "Why, in the green grassy hollow, of course." He laughed mechanically. "That song is about me, you understand." Then in a lower voice, "But nobody knows it except you. Here's my card. President of the Antares Mining Corporation. Sounds fine, doesn't it?"

"What do you mine?" I asked.

"Hopes. Fine big deposit of them, underground. My capital is half a million hopes. My salary as president, twenty thousand hopes."

"Fine!" I exclaimed. "There is nothing better than hope. But Evalina; is she able to live on them?"

"I'll tell you about her. Say, this is a good time to slip out. They're going to have speeches. You don't care to stay?"

"No, I'd rather hear about Evalina and all those hopes."

We made our escape and crossed the campus,

picking our way in the semi-darkness among groups of boys and girls, the current crop of collegians, chattering and laughing with an enthusiasm that had none of the forced quality of the banqueting table we had just left. We found a bench at the edge of the river, and rested our eyes for a moment on the dark surface gridironed with bright stripes from the boat-house on the other side.

"Have a cigar?" I asked.

"No, thank you. I don't smoke. Against my principles. I'm a talking man, by principle. It's this way: you and I meet; you want to tell me your tale and I want to tell you mine. You smoke and I don't; so I win. You may get the start on me, but then you light up and I take the conversation away from you. You may get in again, but soon you'll have to attend to your light, and there I am, rattling away, forty miles an hour."

"All right. I'll light up and keep out of the competition. But what's the good of it? You want the conversation. Just why do you want it?"

"Why do I want it? Well, that's me. I guess that's all the explanation there is. I al-

ways was that way. Talk, talk, talk. If I could keep my mouth closed once in a while I might have a real job, like our toastmaster. Remember him? Couldn't make a speech; can't make one yet. Draws \$50,000 a year. Real money."

"But men do talk themselves into money," I remonstrated. "Sometimes. Let's not argue that, just now. You were going to tell me about Evalina."

"You knew her? Well, she's just like that, still. I was there, last week. She still wears brown dresses because I liked them, does her hair in a Psyche knot, because I liked it. She laughs in the same way, has the same little warbling note—Lord, that used to catch hold of me!"

"Used to!" I repeated severely.

"Well, it does so yet. But you know how it is. The women you see in the city are changing all the time. They're living up to a new level, every year. Evalina, as you call her, is still living to the level of 1908. That's the way they are, in the villages. In dead villages anyway, like Midvale."

"As I recall the Evalina of 1908, she'd be worth perpetuating," I reflected.

"Sure. She is worth it. But you know, it ages you, awfully, to live on the same level, year after year. Lines about the eyes, now; you can't prevent them. You can't keep out a few gray hairs. Well, they make no difference if you are living on the right level. Nothing younger than a woman of thirty if she's living up to a woman of thirty. But if she's living down to the level of twenty, she doesn't seem so young. You get me?"

"Yes," I replied, not easily suppressing my indignation. "You are more analytical than romantic."

"Analytical? That's just what I am. That's why I've not got a dollar."

"Reason Number Two," I remarked. "A little while ago, you said it was talk that did it. Next you will say it was drink."

"No, not me. I never did drink anything but water. Drank it and boosted it as if I had it cornered and was selling it for good money. A man like that never can get anywhere, can he?"

"Reason Number Three. But I'd like to hear the real reason."

"The real reason? Oh yes, I know it well enough. I'm analytical, you see. Do you re-

member my record in your class? Well, I went strong the first four weeks. You thought I was a prize. And then I fizzled. That is always the way with me. I get a new job, I'm all fire and breeze and the boss thinks, now we can go ahead full steam. And we do, for a little while, and then I fizzle."

"How about the Antares Corporation?" I asked.

"Oh, I started that gloriously. Got a quarter of the stock subscribed in a week and not a dollar since."

"Is it a real project?"

"Yes. Big money in it. At least I thought so four weeks ago. But it's stale now. I want to go on to something else."

"In that case I prophesy that Evalina will wait another ten years."

"You're safe there. I know it, and she knows it. But she won't admit it. She's still waiting for me to buck up and make things go, just for once."

"And don't you think you'd better do it?" I spoke perhaps with undue emphasis.

"You're getting peeved with me?" He laughed joylessly. "You think that if a man

wants to amount to something, he can? If you do, you're dead wrong. It isn't in me. I tell you, it isn't in me. You've never seen my father? If you had, you'd understand. All his life he was just about to make things go. The number of big things he nearly did, it's astonishing. But he's all talk, just like me."

"Pardon me," I said. "I'm old-fashioned, and I'm getting rather more disagreeable impressions than I can stand. You have spoken contemptuously of yourself; that is amusing, but I don't like it. You have spoken slightly of Evalina, whom I remember as an altogether admirable person. And now you are maligning your father."

"Maligning? Not a bit of it. Positively, there isn't a living man who suits me so well for company as my father. We go fishing together, and talk and talk, till the sun goes down. We don't catch any fish, but, Lord, the fish we nearly catch! We know each other and we don't hold it up against each other. I understand why my father never amounted to anything and he understands why I don't. But everybody else has expected something more of us. That's the way with you, right now.

You'd like to take me by the ears and hold me up against a job until I froze to it. And what I feel is, you are spoiling a pleasant evening for me."

"God forbid I should spoil it," I replied indignantly. "But I'm thinking of Evalina, and the ten years she's wasted, waiting for you to go from talk to solid work."

"Don't I think of that, too? Let me tell you, there are times I could hate Evalina. She's always expecting, expecting. For ten years, now, I've never had an easy moment. I say to myself, I've got to succeed this time, Evalina is expecting it, but I know I won't succeed. Talk about slavery; that is nothing to what I've gone through and shall have to go through until I'm so old nobody can expect anything of me."

"If that is the way you feel, don't you think you should have released her long ago?"

"Released?" He laughed sadly. "Who does the releasing, slave or master? Let me tell you, Evalina knows just exactly what I am. Of course she didn't know at first. I went strong and she'd made up her mind to take me before she saw me fizzle. Lord, I was surprised, to get so far. But I thought, she'd have plenty of time

to back out. She had, but she wouldn't back out, and she won't. She knew she had made a mistake, but she made it her pride to put in the 'for better or for worse' where it didn't belong."

"At least," I suggested, "you could have persuaded her to take up some work for herself. There certainly was no reason why she should remain in Midvale waiting for you when you were never going to materialize."

"You think I didn't try to get her out of there? She wouldn't stir. She knew she had ten times the brains I had, and if she gave herself a chance to develop, I would be quite out of the question. She didn't dare; it would cut across that for better or for worse idea of hers. And besides, if she got into some kind of work that suited her, or fell in love with another man, it would take the net of her expectations off me. I wouldn't have to amount to anything. I could be free to take a job of looking after the oil cups and tightening up nuts, till I got a few dollars ahead. Then I could run back to the old town and go fishing with my father. There are plenty of jobs like that. They don't lead you anywhere but I don't want to be led anywhere. They are

good enough for a man like me, but I can't take them, because of Evalina, waiting, waiting."

"It seems to me there is just one thing for you to do," I said dogmatically. "Go down to Midvale and put your case before Evalina just as frankly as you have put it before me."

"That is just what I tried to do, a week ago. I went down there intending to tell her that all this faithful waiting is romantic foolishness. I was going to tell her that it's positively immoral for a woman to keep herself tied up with a man who can't amount to anything. Well, I wired her when I was coming, and there she was at the station, just as girlish and sweet as ten years ago, her eyes just as serene and trustful, and we walked home by the path through the hollow. I climbed the cliffs to pluck columbine out of the sunshine, all as bright as if no ten years had gone, and we threw wild rose petals above the tiny cascade at the foot of the hollow and watched them come down like a rainbow. I fizzled. Before I left I had unfolded at least ten projects, all sure to be big money, distinction and independence."

"Humph!" I grunted.

"And say!" he exclaimed eagerly. "There

is just one thing that may pan out. You know why I came to this class reunion? That fat fellow, our toastmaster, needs a manager for his western branch. I found that out before I came east. I've had two talks with him, and I've actually got the job. But I had to go down on my knees for it."

"I won't expect you to hold that job, but if you do, it would interest me to know about it."

"Of course you'll know about it. Do you think I'm the man to hide a light like that under a bushel?"

That was a year ago. I have heard nothing from him since. But Evalina's address remains Midvale in the last Directory, just out.

XXI

Old Scores

THERE was perhaps nothing mysterious about the turn of chance that brought me into renewed relations with Mr. John Auchmuty. Mr. Auchmuty is one of the few remaining staunch Victorian Liberals. For nearly half a century he has fought valiantly for every good cause, domestic or international. Free trade, free competition, free speech, free press are among his dearest gods, and beyond all, what used to be known as plain international justice, but is now denominated national self-determination. And so when the Independence Mission of the Aromunes and Kutzo-Vlachs decided to form an American committee in support of their national aspirations, it was entirely natural that Mr. Auchmuty should have been selected as chairman. My own place on the committee was not entirely fortuitous. The range of choice was not wide, since there is as yet no very great number of Americans with an incorrigible pas-

sion for small nationalities who are really awakened to the national needs of the Aromunes and Kutzo-Vlachs.

But just the same I had a rather uncanny feeling of the cosmic humor of chance as I waited in Mr. Auchmuty's library, under the cool stare of his engraved portraits of Mill and Bentham, John Bright and Gladstone, Goldwin Smith and Grover Cleveland. I had encountered Mr. Auchmuty once before, long before, in circumstances in which his candid good faith had been most shamefully abused by a political group in which I had held membership as a precociously political-minded boy. And while I waited in his frigidly-ordered library—as usual, I had come ahead of the appointed hour—I could not help reviewing in my mind the details of that early encounter.

We were a prairie farming community of the middle nineties, obsessed with a feeling of farmers' grievances: low prices, juggled weights and excessive dockage, railway discriminations, usurious interest rates and ruthless foreclosures. And we had made up our minds, universally, to a sovereign remedy: free and unlimited coinage of silver. We had read Coin's *Financial School*,

E. B. Andrews on an *Honest Dollar* and a pamphlet containing extracts from Chevalier, badly translated and therefore the more authentically authoritative. We had also read a pamphlet by J. Laurence Laughlin, taking the other side, and there was not one of us who could not refute it with a single well chosen imprecation. The bankers, the professors of political economy and other enemies of the people we knew were against us. They commanded a whole arsenal of super-refined sophisms. But our minds were too thoroughly made up to be penetrable by the guile of the paid advocate or the pedantries of the endowed professor. The people were perishing for want of money. The mountains were veined with the good white metal that offered salvation. What more might be said was plainly of the Devil.

The case, then, as we saw it, was one that did not admit of argument. We did not want to hear argument on it. Indeed the attempt to argue so definitely closed a case appeared to us immoral. And so when the Republican state committee offered to send among us the Honorable John Auchmuty to deliver an address on sound money, or, if we preferred, to debate with

any free silver speaker we might name, our first impulse was to reject the offer with scorn. Debate the Ten Commandments! That was what the proposal amounted to. But it was October, when the air of the prairies is crisp and the appetite is good and an irrepressible sense of humor permeates the prairieman's blood. Somebody cried out, "Let him debate Clay Robinson." It might have been myself; it might have been anyone else, for it was one of those suggestions that express exactly the sense of each. Clay Robinson was an occasionally lucid lunatic. He labored under the delusion that he was the greatest living orator and usually succeeded in dispersing with his tongue any assemblage he encountered. Always he had been our bane, but now we had good use for his talents. So we wrote the Republican state committee that the Honorable Clay Robinson would be pleased to meet the Honorable John Auchmuty in debate. We guaranteed a large and enthusiastic audience.

No one would have supposed that our sparsely settled district could have produced so huge a crowd as packed into Shreve's Lyceum Hall to hear the debate. In the middle of the stage sat

our chairman, tapping his sides to make sure they would hold when the debate got under way. Crouched in a corner was the Honorable Clay Robinson, darting quick, triumphant glances from under his tumbled cataract of red hair. The train from the South was late; but presently a whistle announced its arrival, and in ten minutes the reception committee mounted the stage escorting the Honorable John Auchmuty, spare, erect, with his coat severely buttoned to his throat, his burnsides forming severe angles on his pale cheeks, his prominent blue eyes staring before him with the sad, severe expression immortalized in the portraits of Matthew Arnold. He seemed a bit startled when the Honorable Clay Robinson with knees crouched and arms swinging darted up to him and grasped his hand. A gale of laughter swept the room, but we covered it up with tumultuous applause. Mr. Auchmuty bowed and smiled under his joyless eyes.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he began, in an even, conciliatory voice. We held our breath and fixed our attention on Clay Robinson in his corner, preparing to spring. The speaker was getting under way. What he was saying, of course,

nobody knew. We were not there to listen to argument. Mostly he appeared to be quoting authorities. He paused impressively after the name of Professor J. Laurence Laughlin.

"Hold on!" cried Clay Robinson, springing menacingly toward Mr. Auchmuty. "Will you tell this crowd who J. Laurence Laughlin is?"

"I shall reply to this question later," said Mr. Auchmuty with dignity.

"Answer him! Answer him!" roared the audience.

"Very well." Mr. Auchmuty presented an emphatic biography of Professor Laughlin, and proceeded with his argument.

"Hold on!" yelled Clay Robinson, threatening Mr. Auchmuty with his fist. "Will you tell us whether there has been a single movement for the benefit of the common people your Professor Laughlin has not been against?"

"Answer him!" roared the audience again.

Mr. Auchmuty paused to get his indignation under control. But soon his voice, measured and conciliatory as ever, ran through the roll of Professor Laughlin's good works and hurried on with the argument.

"You want more money. You think that

free silver will give you more money. But would the gold we now have remain in the country? Impossible. Under Gresham's Law the silver would expel the gold."

"Hold on!" cried Clay Robinson. "Who passed that law?"

Mr. Auchmuty drew himself into his extreme of rigidity.

"That, Mr. Robinson, is an economic law. It is one of the eternal laws of nature. Or, if you care to put it that way"—and his voice trembled with suppressed energy—"it is a law of God!"

"Hey!" shrieked Clay Robinson. "Ladies and gentlemen! This man puts his own fool notions into the mouth of God Almighty! Who does he think he is?"

For a few seconds the audience sat aghast. We were for the most part swearing men, but this was downright blasphemy. Still, the sin rested on Clay Robinson, not responsible even under the mundane law. And the mien of John Auchmuty! To save our souls we could not have refrained longer from laughing. Spasm pursued spasm over our sides until they were so sore that we could hardly gasp. Mr. Auchmuty seized upon the first approach of calm to

proceed with his speech. He repeated himself, hesitated, stammered, then drew from his pocket the copy prepared for the press and read it, hastily, meaninglessly, pausing only when a recrudescence of laughter broke over the audience.

At last Mr. Auchmuty made his final bow. Clay Robinson leaped to the edge of the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen! No living man knows what the speaker said or why he said it. But this is what he ought to have said." Then followed an absolutely incredible farrago of nonsense. Mr. Auchmuty's eyes seemed to be starting from his head as he listened. And when the torrent of disjointed phrases came to an end, he looked about him, bewildered, as if seeking an avenue of flight.

"Answer him! Answer him!" roared the audience. Mr. Auchmuty rose, stammered, hesitated.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began in a thin, shaken voice. "I don't think you are treating me quite fairly."

The audience roared. Mr. Auchmuty bowed abruptly to the chairman and fled.

After I came to know what a sincere and

manly friend of humanity Mr. Auchmuty really was, I often wanted to meet him and make such amends as I could for my part in the outrage. But no occasion had presented itself until I found myself by chance associated with him on the Committee for the Promotion of the National Rights of the Aromunes and Kutzo-Vlachs. It was therefore with much eagerness that I rose when I heard the library door open and the sound of a footstep on the rug.

Mr. John Auchmuty had remained just as spare, erect, severe and sad of countenance as when he had confronted his prairie audience twenty-three years ago. Only his burnsides had turned white and his eyes had apparently grown dim.

"I think I have never had the pleasure of meeting you before," he said affably.

"No. But I heard you speak, a great many years ago."

"You did?" He smiled benignantly. "May I ask where?"

"It was in a western state, in free silver times. Do you remember debating the money question with Clay Robinson?"

A slight flush passed over the old man's face.

"Do you know I never thought that the audience was quite fair to me."

"No," I replied. "We didn't intend to be fair to you. We had already made up our minds."

"Now, that Honorable Clay Robinson," continued Mr. Auchmuty, "I really think you might have found a more logical champion, even if you did have your minds made up. Really, his performance wasn't very creditable to you, you know."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "Didn't you realize that he was our pet lunatic? Didn't you see that it was nothing but a put-up job to have some fun at a gold bug's expense?"

Mr. Auchmuty's face turned a deep crimson.

"Oh!" he said bitterly. "Nice business, wasn't it? To permit a gentleman to come in good faith into that detestable district just to humiliate him! And you men considered yourselves entitled to a voice in American government."

I did my best to exculpate myself on the ground that it had not been my personal project and that at the time I had not even attained to my majority. It did no good. I tried to get

over on common ground by taking up the business of our committee. We could not agree on a single point. Should we describe the nation we wished to befriend as the Aromunes or as the Kutzo-Vlachs? I voted for Aromunes, whereupon Mr. Auchmuty insisted on Kutzo-Vlachs. I yielded the point, whereupon he went over to Aromunes and charged me with trimming besides. Because I was for autonomy, he would hear of nothing but complete national independence, and when I came over to his side he expressed his scorn of the superficiality of a man who would make an independent state out of a people scattered over the flanks of Pindus and the foothills of Olympus, with a long stretch of unfriendly territory between. I cursed myself for permitting the ghost of an ancient prank to rise up to becloud the solution of a live international problem. All I could now do was to get off the committee. I announced my intention of doing so, and rose.

"That is just as well," said Mr. Auchmuty acidly. And then an expression of senile craft took possession of his eyes.

"Please don't go," he said with forced cordiality. "There is something else I want to talk

with you about. I am a reader of yours. That is, at least an occasional reader."

"I am much gratified," I replied, rather puzzled by his veiled manner. "I hope I please you."

"Yes, on the whole you do. But I have observed of late that a great many people are criticizing you as a reactionary, or else as a Bolshevik. And I really think you ought to answer them."

"Oh, you do?" I had caught his drift. "You really think I ought to answer them?"

"Yes, indeed, I do," he replied fervently. "Everybody says you ought to answer them."

"Everybody," I repeated reflectively. "My friends, or those who want me to borrow trouble?"

Mr. Auchmuty looked at me balefully. "Perhaps both; but it doesn't matter. You said you had to go?"

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